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Hebron theft

JEWISH settlers yesterday seized a Turkish bath owned by the Waqf Islamic Trust in Hebron. Israeli soldiers stood guarding workers as they removed stones to build a wall that will annex the bath to a nearby Jewish settlement. Salah Al-Natshe, director of the trust, said the 30 square metre bath was to be turned into a small museum.

The West Bank city of Hebron is home to more than 100,000 Palestinians and 400 Israeli settlers. Plans to redeploy Israeli troops were postponed by the outgoing Labour government, and Prime Minister-designate Benjamin Netanyahu said there would be no redeployment until he had studied the Israeli-PLO agreements.

Meanwhile, Israel further eased a 14-week closure of the West Bank and Gaza Strip by increasing the number of Palestinian workers allowed to enter Israel from 10,000 immediately after the elections to 22,000 now.

TV confession

BAHRAIN yesterday said it would televise the confessions of suspects arrested in connection with an alleged pro-Iranian plot to topple the government by force. The Interior Ministry said on Tuesday that it had arrested 44 people involved in the plot, who were recruited 18 months before disturbances erupted in December 1994.

The US State Department expressed support for Bahrain and said it took seriously allegations that Iranian militants had tried to overthrow the emirate's government. (see p.5)

Lawsuit delay

THE ADMINISTRATIVE Court decided on Tuesday to postpone until 2 July the hearing of a lawsuit filed by three opposition parties contesting the legality of the government's privatisation policy, reports Mona El-Nahhas.

Government lawyer General El-Labbani asked the court to quash the case, saying the cabinet decision of selling public sector companies was an act of sovereignty, which could not be contested before the courts. El-Labbani added that the plaintiffs had no direct interest in the case.

The plaintiffs responded that privatisation hurt the people's interests and risked putting thousands out of work.

The lawsuit was filed last April by leaders of the Nasrist, Labour and Tagammu parties, following a cabinet decree authorising the sale of around 240 companies in the public sector.

Green day

CAIRO governor Omar Abdel-Akhar, prominent journalist Salama Ahmed Salama and the Evangelical Society in Al-Minya yesterday received awards recognising their contribution to environmental concerns at celebrations marking International Environment Day, reports Sherine Nasr. The Qatamiya Nursery, an area of 10 feddans which will help the green belt around Cairo, was inaugurated at the start of the celebrations. Abdel-Akhar underlined the efforts exerted by the Cairo Governorate to establish more green areas by converting many local markets into public parks. Health Minister Ismail Sallam said that environmental awareness in Egypt was on the rise. Forty incinerators have recently been built to get rid of hospital waste, he said.

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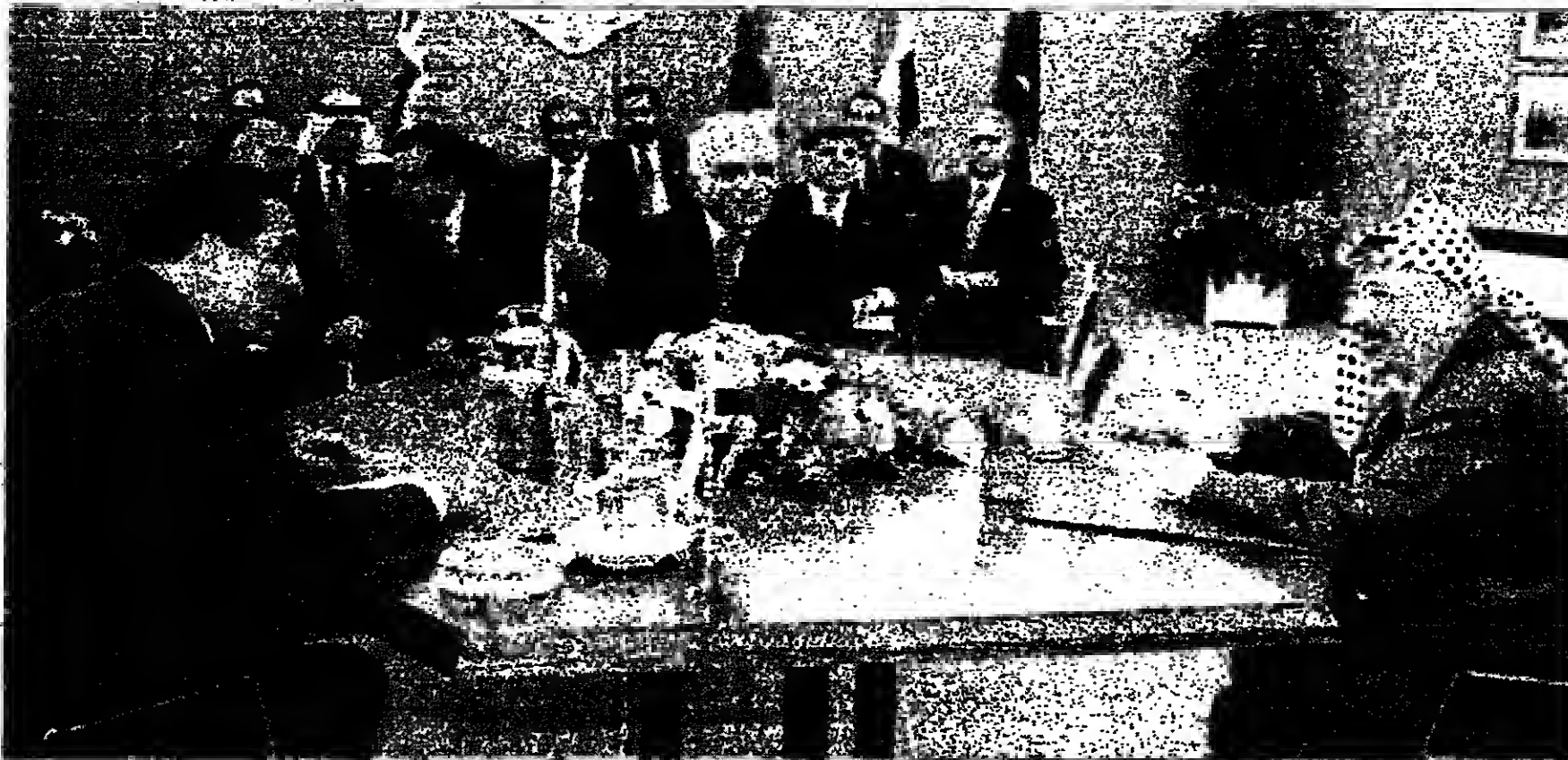


photo: Reuters

Test time for Likud

Faced with a hard-line Israeli government, Arabs, urged by Mubarak, acted urgently to unify their stands

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, Jordan's King Hussein and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat met at the Jordanian port city of Aqaba yesterday. The meeting is one of a series of Arab mini-summits led by Egypt with the aim of restoring Arab solidarity, particularly after the narrow victory of Israel's newly-elected hardline Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Mubarak announced that he will meet for the second time in three days with Syrian President Hafez Assad on Friday in the Saudi capital Riyadh, where the two presidents will be joined by Saudi Arabia's King Fahd. The meeting was set up during a quick visit to Riyadh by the foreign ministers of Egypt and Syria on Monday.

The three leaders called for a redoubling of efforts in the current peace process, according to a joint statement issued after the meeting. The statement added that all commitments undertaken to date would have to be honoured — a reference to Netanyahu's comments during the Israeli election campaign that he might not accept all the deals signed by the defeated Labour government of former Prime Minister Shimon Peres. It also called for supporting the Palestinians in their talks with Israel and for the resumption of negotiations to end Israel's conflict with Syria and Lebanon. The five-year-old Middle East peace process, the statement said, was based on United Nations resolutions calling on Israel to return all occupied territory in exchange for peace with its Arab neighbours.

In a joint press conference held after the Aqaba meeting, Mubarak told reporters, "We cannot make a judgment on Israel's direction. We have to wait for the formation of the government, and if it opts to work for peace we will support it. But if it chooses the opposite, we will adopt another position."

Hussein and Arafat took a similar stand, saying they respected the choice of the Israeli people and hoped that Israel would remain committed to its agreement with the Palestinians.

Hussein, who was the only leader to meet with Netanyahu before his election, rejected reports that his country might be ready to deal directly with the Likud leader on the Palestinian issue, bypassing the PLO, the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

"As far as Jordan is concerned, it backs the Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza, under the leadership of the PLO, in achieving their rights on their national soil. We don't deal with any side except the PLO," he told reporters.

Hussein stressed: "If some people think it is impossible to have a Palestinian state, it will be even more impossible to have Jordan turned into a Palestinian state."

Mubarak, who arrived in Aqaba with the Palestinian leader, said that there was no contradiction between the Aqaba mini-summit and the planned meeting in Riyadh on Friday, because both aimed at coordinating Arab action. "Without seeking such coordination, I

don't believe we would be able to meet as Arabs once again because we have many problems and differences, and we have been working on solving these differences for a long time," Mubarak said. "I hope that we will be successful, God willing, in reaching a solution or taking a step by the end of this week which will help in the process of Arab reconciliation."

An informed source told Agence France Press (AFP) that the Aqaba and Riyadh meetings were part of an effort to bring together 11 Arab leaders for the first time since the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990.

AFP also reported that King Hussein had sought to reassure Mubarak and Arafat that Netanyahu was committed to the peace process, following a secret visit to Amman by one of his top aides on Monday. A top Jordanian official told the agency that Netanyahu's advisor on Arab affairs, Dorc Gold, had conveyed the prime minister's assurances to Hussein.

Following the summit, the three leaders affirmed their belief that, sooner or later, there would be a Palestinian state. "The Palestinian state will be declared very soon, with Jerusalem as its capital," said Arafat. "It is the choice of the Palestinian people and nobody can oppose it."

Mubarak also predicted the creation of the Palestinian state. "History will prove that there will be such a state, whether people like it or not."

Asked if he was disturbed by Netanyahu's

declarations that he would not meet with him, the Palestinian leader replied: "No. No. No." Arafat said he hoped that the next similar meeting of Arab leaders would be held in Jerusalem.

In Jerusalem, David Levy, a former foreign minister who is a candidate for the same post in Netanyahu's government, said that the Likud leader was considering forming a national unity government with the defeated Labour Party. Such an alliance, he said, would help Israel in peace talks with the Arabs and in its international relations.

But another foreign policy adviser to Netanyahu fuelled fears over peace prospects with Syria after announcing that the newly elected premier would explore "a completely new approach" to negotiations with Damascus.

Zalman Shoval, former Israeli ambassador to Washington and foreign policy spokesman for the Likud Party, said Israel would not focus on a full peace treaty with an exchange of ambassadors, as the Peres government had done. Instead, the new government would try to come to agreement with Syria on specific issues, "without necessarily the envelope of a formal peace treaty, which is problematic".

He said that issues of sharing water resources, a ceasefire in Lebanon and economic cooperation could be discussed. However, he did not mention the question of withdrawal from Syria's Golan Heights, the main condition Syria has set to signing a peace agreement with Israel.

Drama by the thousands

Another phase of Egypt's cinema city is ready, but the studios are yet to be built. Information Minister Safwat El-Sherif updates Nevine Khalil on the current plans



President Hosni Mubarak is expected to inaugurate the second phase of the cinema complex at the 6th of October City within this week. The vast complex preliminarily estimated to cost \$1 billion was initiated 10 years ago, and now includes outdoor Islamic, Pharaonic, rural, Bedouin and forest locations, railway tracks and an underwater filming area which will also house dolphins.

Covering an area of two and a half million square metres, the city is expected to resemble America's Universal Studios' facilities, services and management. Housing 14 studios and numerous outdoor locations, the city will produce up to 6,000 hours of drama at full capacity.

Since its partial inauguration in 1994, a number of the most prominent productions were filmed at the city including the film Nasser '56 and the television serial Al-Furqan (The Knights).

Among other locations the president will inaugurate on the occasion of Media Day is the Pharaonic city Tel El-Amarna where Akhnaten will be filmed, an underwater filming site and a large theatre to be used for shooting stage productions or large audience programmes.

In the past, sets and scenery were built and then taken down because of the lack of space. Filming relics like citadels and cities dot the various deserts like Abu Rawash. Now, locations will be permanent and only the edifices and names will change.

"In the past there was a lot of waste," said Information Minister Safwat El-Sherif. "We even built the Qa'ba but had to tear it down after filming."

El-Sherif added that in the past, Pharaonic productions were avoided because building sets was too costly and filming in the original sites harms the ancient ruins. Now, there is the Tel El-Amarna location which is a life-size site, built and decorated with great precision.

The cinema city, however, is still missing its most important component: the studios. An international tender was held a few months ago to decide who will build the large studio complex, and a decision will be taken soon.

"We will decide within weeks who will be given the task," said El-Sherif. Some of the largest international companies grouped together for the bidding because the winning group will deliver a turn-key complex, complete with technology, equipment, furnishings and warehouses.

The Japanese drew up the basic plans for space, design and facilities and over the past two years the French outlined the technical and structural designs as well as the technology. The building of the 14 studios will be divided into two phases, beginning with eight studios to be built over three years at an estimated cost of \$300 million.

"This gradual completion and usage of the studios is to ensure that construction is proportional to production," El-Sherif said.

The contract for the construction will be signed by a joint-venture company owned by the Egyptian Radio and Television Union (ERTU), private sector companies, banks and stockholders. "It is this company which will finance the construction of the studios," El-Sherif added.

The government has paid about \$200 million by financing what has already

been built at the city and it intends to keep a 40 to 50 per cent share of the project. The banks will own 20 per cent of the shares, and the remainder, worth about \$100 million, will be sold on the stock market.

El-Sherif explained that studios, locations, costumes and scenery will be rented out to producers. "Anyone who wants to rent space will have the right to do so," he asserted. Once the city functions at full capacity, an estimated 3,000 hours of private production are expected.

El-Sherif believes that ERTU productions will take up at least half of the city's capacity in the beginning. "We built this city for production," he said, "and any free space will be used."

It is estimated that 10,000 hours of drama are needed to feed the numerous television and cinema outlets in the Arab world. "Currently we only produce one tenth of this amount of hours," the minister said. "The new city will provide a minimum of 3,500 to 4,000 hours of drama."

"This city will be a springboard for Arab drama," El-Sherif added. "We are open to the skies and are not worried about foreign productions. Our weapon is distinction and excellence in drama production."

Another source of revenue will come from the city doubling up as a tourist site, where visitors will soon be taken on tours of the studios and the outdoor locations. "The city is designed to accommodate visitors without interfering with on-going filming," El-Sherif said. According to the minister, profits are expected within two years, mainly from the "lucrative tourist revenues".

Concrete jungles

URBAN centres will house more than half of the world's population by the end of the century and UN estimates for the year 2015 place most of these inhabitants in developing countries.

Only three days after the opening of the UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) last Monday, the pressure is on to close the gap between North and South and to resolve disputes among delegates from 184 nations over issues in the city summit's final agenda, reports Wagdi Riad from Istanbul.

Out of the 121 recommendations under discussion, 44 are being flatly rejected by delegates. On Tuesday, participants appeared close to reaching a compromise on one of the conferences most hotly-disputed questions — housing rights.

Developing countries want to see housing included as a basic human right, but the US has insisted on limiting the burden on governments out of fear that otherwise it would open the floodgates on governmental spending in that sector.

The North-South divide has widened over the allocation of financial aid for development. "What international donor institutions and the North present as financial aid is not enough for the South," a member of the official Indian delegation told Al-Ahram Weekly.

"The crisis of urban development are crises of all states, rich and poor," said the UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros Ghali in his opening speech.

The IMF announced at the conference that it would allocate \$15 billion to break the poverty circle in Third World countries over the next five years while European community officials pledged \$5.5 billion.

Presenting Egypt's conference paper, Minister of Local Administration Mahmoud Sherif, head of the official Egyptian delegation to the city summit, highlighted the government's efforts to develop new living centres outside of Cairo to cope with the mega-city's swelling population and national projects to develop slum and rural areas.

The national development endeavour Shourouk (Sunrise), a nine-year project launched in 1995, should be a model in popular participation in raising the standard of life in the Egyptian village, Sherif said.

Cairo, Lagos, Dhaka, Beijing, Calcutta and Sao Paulo were listed in a UN conference statement among the developing cities facing the greatest water problems. Most cities in the developing world will face extreme water shortages by the year 2010, the statement said.

"Water is going to be the most hotly-contested urban issue facing the world community in the 21st century," conference Secretary-General Waly N'Dow said on Monday.

The UN's last international conference of this century will close 14 June. (see p.14)

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New press law draws closer

A new draft press law is currently being finalised. But, journalists are not optimistic about the final result

The cabinet, at a meeting last Sunday, ratified the draft for a new press law and submitted it to President Hosni Mubarak. The president will refer the ratified draft back to the Shura Council and then to the People's Assembly for enactment. However, journalists, who have been campaigning for over a year against the restrictive press legislation known as Law 93, are unhappy with the new draft, and have vowed to struggle on until all the articles of "the infamous law" have been repealed, Mona El-Nahhas reports.

The draft was approved, in principle, by the Shura Council following a three-day debate which ended on 27 May. Journalists were outraged by the hostile attitude towards the press and press freedom shown by a large number of Shura Council members. The Council, however, ended its debate by approving the draft as submitted, while it turned down the amendments demanded by the Press Syndicate.

Journalists had rejected the draft law during their 21 May extraordinary General Assembly, insisting that their amendments be included in the draft.

While most journalists admitted that there had been some steps forward, principally the abolishing of preventive custody for journalists under investigation for publication offences, they believe that their main demand, the repeal of Law 93 as a whole, has not been met. The only remaining article of the old law, Article Two, is seen as a major stumbling block because it imposes stiff penalties, including imprisonment, for publication offences. Journalists believe that publication offences should be punishable by fines only.

The Shura Council will debate the draft for a second time next Saturday before sending it to the People's Assembly for final enactment. The new law is expected to be issued at the end of June.

Meanwhile, Press Syndicate Chairman Ibrahim Nafie submitted a memorandum to President Mubarak immediately after the Shura Council debate, putting forward the journalists' point of view and explaining their demands.

Journalists see the intervention of Mubarak as their last hope in their battle to secure a fairer law, and attempts are currently underway to conduct negotiations between leading members of the Press Syndicate and officials of the legislative institutions to ensure that journalists' demands are taken into account in further debates of the draft in both the Shura Council and the People's Assembly.

"The Press Syndicate council will hold an extraordinary meeting within the next few days to deal with the latest developments," said Magdi Mehanna, a member of the syndicate's council. "It will also discuss the measures necessary to bring forward the syndicate's eighth extraordinary General Assembly, scheduled for 23 June."

But while pessimism pervades, leading journalists refuse to believe that their struggle has ended in defeat.

Gamal Badawi, the chief editor of the *Wafd* Party's daily newspaper, *Al-Wafd*, believes that journalists' handling of the current situation will prove critical to the final outcome. "The Shura Council's discussions, although not binding, have outlined a scenario of what will happen, and the spirit of Law 93 still exists in the new draft," he said.

"However, journalists have not yet reached a deadlock," Badawi added. "Our only remaining hope lies in the hands of President Mubarak, who should act as an arbiter of this very complicated issue. We've exhausted all forms of dialogue."



'A new horizon for our children'

Last Monday, Mrs Suzanne Mubarak was awarded an honorary doctorate of law degree from Westminster College in Pennsylvania, in recognition of her national and international efforts, over the past two decades, in the fields of motherhood and childhood.

"Mrs Mubarak is an example of a global citizen," said Oscar Remick, chancellor of Westminster College, at the awarding ceremony held in Cairo. He applauded her efforts at promoting literacy through the "Reading for All" programme, leading the drive for building schools and making education available in remote areas.

"Education remains one of my priorities," said Mrs Mubarak. "My dream is a society which would open a new horizon for our children."

The dream is already taking shape. Earlier in the week, Mrs Mubarak inaugurated the Arab world's first-ever state-of-the-art museum for children which was constructed in Heliopolis at a cost of LE6 million. Young visitors can now learn more about their country by taking a journey back in time to ancient Egypt, down the Nile Valley, across the desert and down to the bottom of the Red Sea. Along with the video

Having just launched a new high-tech children's museum, Mrs Suzanne Mubarak was awarded an honorary doctorate from a US university in recognition of her efforts in the fields of motherhood and childhood. **Rania Khallaf reports**

screens, computers and telephones through which youngsters learn about Egypt's history and geography, the museum also boasts a recreation centre where children participate in educational games.

"The museum is a gift to all the children of Egypt," said Mrs Mubarak at the museum which was built in cooperation with the Natural History Museum of London. The British museum supplied the designs, technology and equipment.

The museum's first section provides information on Pharaonic Egypt. The second takes visitors to the Nile Valley where children can listen to a Nubian girl talking about her everyday life, or listen to a Nubian song. Next is the Bedouin tent, from which children can wander into a desert that includes a selection of desert wildlife that passes before the children on video screens. The third section is perhaps the most exciting for children: a simulated submarine journey to the depths of the Red Sea where they see a myriad of marine life.

The main aim of the museum, Mrs Mubarak said, was to teach children about the beauty of their country, but through an approach radically different from that found in ordinary museums and school textbooks.

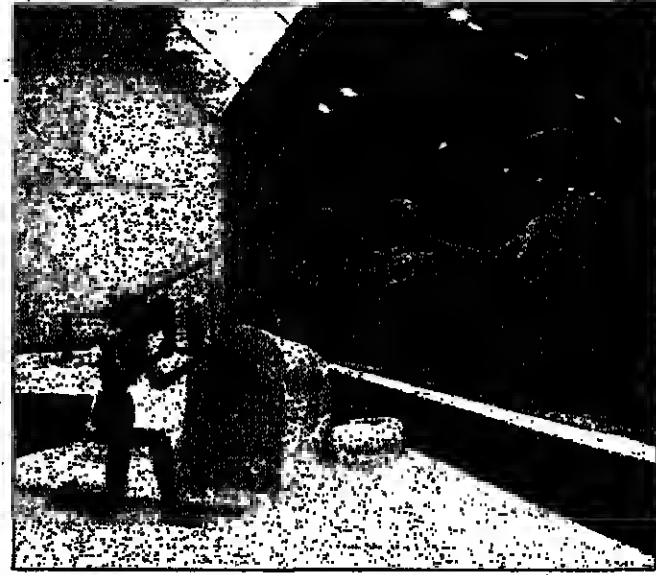


Photo: Sherif Shouk

Royals out of the shade

After over 40 years of anonymity, royal family members are back, in the courts and on the news. **Mona El-Nahhas investigates the nebulous lawsuit**

Last November, the daughters of the late King Farouk filed a lawsuit before the Cairo Southern Court against the Egyptian government, claiming their rights to Al-Tahra Palace and 150 faddans in the Giza and Shariya governorates. The first hearing was set for 7 May but was delayed until 11 June to give the plaintiffs enough time to prepare their case. The State Judiciary Authority asserts that the plaintiffs have no rightful claim to the disputed property as it is state-owned. Legal experts believe the case is weak.

Farouk, the last ruler of the Mohamed Ali dynasty, was overthrown by the 1952 Revolution, which abolished the monarchy and confiscated the royal family's property. Palaces such as Abdin, Al-Qubba, Al-Montazah and Ras Al-Tin were converted into presidential residences. Al-Tahra Palace, located in the Zeitoun district, now hosts Egypt's state guests. It is considered among the most magnificent palaces in the country by virtue of the unique collection of antiquities housed in it.

As to the three princesses, Ferial, 58, Fawzya, 56, and Fadia, 53, they now live in Geneva, Switzerland. They did not attend

any of the court sessions, presumably because the idea of visiting Egypt is not politically attractive to them. They gave power of attorney to Mahmoud Dardir, an obscure lawyer. In an interview with *Al-Ahram Weekly*, Dardir said he has never met any of the princesses and that he was asked by their business agent, El-Sayed Abdel-Fattah, to take charge of the case. Dardir claims that since then, he has been unable to locate Abdel-Fattah and that he knows nothing more about him. Dardir also said that he dislikes the royal family, appreciates the revolution and took on the case because of his sense of professional duty.

The lawsuit gives a brief background on the Al-Tahra Palace: it was owned by Mohamed Taher Pasha, a member of the royal family. In 1939, the late Queen Farida bought the palace, the area of which is estimated at 20,056 square metres, for LE40,000. In 1944, Farida presented the palace as a gift to the late King Farouk by means of a property deed. In the lawsuit, Dardir claims that Farouk cancelled the deed in 1948 and gave the palace back to Farida to compensate her for their divorce that same year. Dardir has no legal evidence of this, however, and insisted that "cancelling property deeds can be done without documents."

The lawsuit states that the palace should not have been confiscated since it was turned over to Farida, who was no longer a member of the Royal Family after her divorce. Accordingly, the lawsuit calls for restoring the palace to Farida's heirs or compensating them according to Cassation Court rulings issued in 1971.

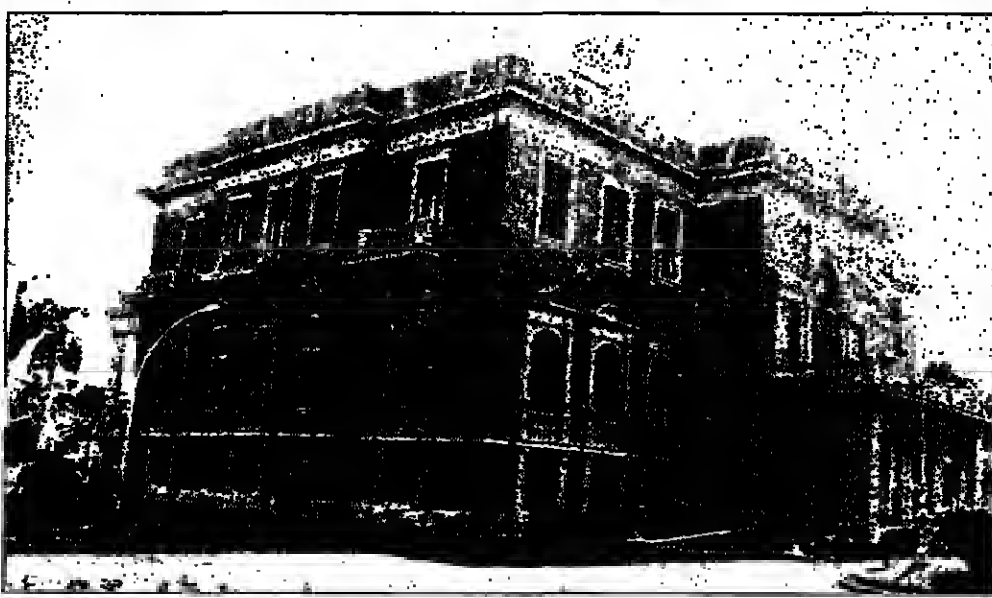
According to the lawsuit, Farida owned 1,744 faddans in the Delta Governorate of Shariya and three faddans in Cairo's Al-Haram district that were seized by the state. The owners were not compensated and the lawsuit states, in accordance with the 1969 agrarian reform law which limited individual property to 50 faddans, Queen Farida's daughters should have been granted 50 faddans each.

Finally, Dardir contests the constitutionality of Law 589 of the year 1953 which defines the measures by which the Mohamed Ali family property should be confiscated. According to this law, only a special committee formed by the revolution is entitled to

hear lawsuits related to property confiscated by decrees of the Revolution Command Council. Dardir says the law contradicts the 1971 constitution which gives every citizen the right to appeal to their "natural judge".

Hossam Lutfi, professor of Civil Law at Cairo University, believes the plaintiffs have no real chance of winning the lawsuit. "The plaintiffs' legal representative should submit to the court an official document proving that King Farouk annulled the [Al-Tahra] palace's property deed and gave it back to Queen Farida. This would prove that the palace was owned by Queen Farida in 1953, the date when property belonging to the Mohamed Ali family was confiscated. Since Farida, at that time, was no longer a member of the royal family after her divorce from Farouk in 1948, the court could order the palace to be returned to Farida's heirs on the grounds that confiscation measures were wrongfully conducted," said Lutfi.

"If the princesses do not provide such a document, their legal position will be very weak and the court will never issue a judgement in their favour," he concluded.



Al-Tahra Palace: Will the princesses get it back?

Professor of Civil Law and member of the Shura Council, Ahmed Salama, shares Lutfi's assessment of the case. "Without documentation," he said, "it will be impossible for them to get the palace back."

Salama also said that according to the agrarian reform law of the year 1969, Queen Farida and her daughters should have been allotted a total of 100 faddans as a family, and not 50 faddans each as their lawyer demands. "Getting nothing at that time does not give them the right to now take back the land, which is either state-owned or has been distributed among small farmers," said Salama. "The plaintiffs should have filed legal action for their rights to the property within the 15 years term allowed by the law, after its issue in 1969. Their rights lapsed after that period."

Salama also said that it is not legally sound to contest the constitutionality of Law 589. "To rule that any law is unconstitutional, one has to prove that it contradicted the constitution in effect when the law was issued, and not the current constitution," he said. "Otherwise it is nonsense." He does not expect the plaintiffs will gain anything from filing the lawsuit.

The State Judiciary Authority, which acts as a defence council in any case filed against the government, prepared a legal memorandum in response to the lawsuit stating that the property mentioned in the lawsuit is owned by the state, that Egyptian heads of state may utilise the property while they are in power, and that it does not constitute their private property. Accordingly the state, under Law 589, did not confiscate this property, instead, they took the property back.

Moreover, states the memorandum, the Cairo Southern Court is not entitled to hear the case. Law 589 made it a condition that whoever contests any of the confiscation measures should do so within the year following the issue of the Revolution Command Council's decree or else their right lapses. The plaintiffs took this step 43 years too late.

Al-Muhager twice banned

Banned, unbanned and banned again. The two-year story of Youssef Chahine's film, *The Emigrant*, seems as turbulent as that of its hero, based on the Biblical Joseph. **Rania Allami reports**

Film director Youssef Chahine's attempts to lift the ban on his film *Al-Muhager* (The Emigrant), first imposed in December 1994, ended last week with the Court of Appeal's verdict that the ban should remain in place. Chahine has been fighting a group of Islamist lawyers, supported by Al-Azhar, in a series of lawsuits and counter-suits.

The Islamist lawyers, led by Mahmoud Abul-Feid, argued that the film violated Islamic law banning the appearance of prophets on the screen. They maintained that *Al-Muhager* depicted the story of Joseph, whom Muslims revere as a prophet, that Chahine did not adhere to instructions from Al-Azhar to remove certain scenes before the film's release, and demanded that the film be banned. The court ruled in their favour.

Chahine appealed, and the ban was lifted in March 1995, on the basis that those seeking the ban had no direct interest in the case. However, the Islamist lawyers contested the ruling, and the ban was re-imposed. Chahine's final attempt to remove the ban failed last week when South Cairo's Primary Court rejected his appeal on procedural grounds.

According to Egyptian law, anyone who appeals against a court ruling should inform his adversary within three months of filing the appeal. Abul-Feid and Al-Azhar presented the court with a document proving that they had not been informed of Chahine's appeal until six months after it had been filed, and the appeal was thus ruled invalid on technical grounds.

The court's verdict, which pre-empted any discussion of the film itself and its possible violation of Islamic teachings, has left the debate over the film, and how Egyptian law should deal with it, unresolved. Despite the different rulings by various courts, a final precedent has not been set. This has ramifications in a wider context because the case is one of a series of confrontations between Islamists and supporters of freedom of expression in Egypt.

In its memorandum to the court, Al-Azhar said that the film not only depicted the prophet's character, but also personified and degraded him. "The film's script is similar to the story of Prophet Joseph. Therefore, it has to be banned until all the obscene scenes are removed," the memo said. Sheikh El-Sayed Askar, director

general of the *Da'wa* (Islamic preaching) and Religious Media Department of Al-Azhar, told *Jamaat-ad-deen* *Musallam* that the Egyptian people "were religious by nature and the Egyptian Constitution stipulates that Islam is the official religion of the state." He rejected the argument of some intellectuals that Al-Azhar has no right to impose censorship on art, citing a ministerial decree, Number 220 of 1972, stating that any form of art dealing with religion should be referred



Youssef Chahine

to Al-Azhar for approval. Chahine's *Muhager*, Askar argued, was bound by this decree.

Nasema Hamdi, former head of the Censorship Department, and known as the "iron lady" because of her firm decisions concerning the release or banning of movies, concurred: "Al-Azhar must be consulted in matters where religion is involved, although I believe in the independence of censorship. But if Al-Azhar recommends banning, I will certainly say that the film must be banned." Hamdi added however that she considered Chahine an outstanding director, "who has never done anything to offend Egypt."

In its short run, the film was viewed by 80,000 people, making it a major box office hit. Its central character is Ram, a man in search of truth, identity and inner peace. He feels that the secrets and keys to knowledge are in Egypt, and when he is shipped off there by vengeful brothers who want him out of the way, he learns and goes back to his country to save his people from ignorance. Ram's character is similar in some aspects to that of the Prophet Joseph, but Chahine vehemently denies that it was his intention to tell the exact story of the prophet, saying that his film is about human experience.

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Monastery's key dispute

The Coptic archbishop of Jerusalem described Israel's latest proposed solution to the dispute over ownership of the Monastery of Deir El-Sultan as an 'old play', reports **Omayma Abdel-Latif**

The Coptic Church has turned down a recent proposal by Israel aimed at ending the 26-year dispute over the guardianship of the Monastery of Deir El-Sultan, part of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.

According to the Israeli scheme, a copy of the keys to the eastern gate of the monastery would be handed over to the Egyptian church. The monastery would then be shared with the Ethiopian monks who took it over by force in 1970, with the collaboration of the Israeli police. It has remained in their hands ever since.

A spokesman for Pope Shenouda III, head of the Coptic Orthodox Church, ruled out any possibility of accepting the Israeli proposal.

"It is out of question that the Coptic Church would accept such a proposal," he said. "The Coptic Church is Coptic property and any attempt to divide it is flatly rejected," said the spokesman.

Archbishop Abraham, head of the Coptic Church in Jerusalem, told *Al-Ahram Weekly* while on a visit to Cairo that the proposal was an "old play" on the part of the Israeli government, which does not want to return the monastery to its original owners.

"This is unacceptable," he said. "This monastery is part of Egypt's sacred heritage, and we will never give it up or even share it with the Ethiopian monks."

He dismissed the idea that the Coptic Church was negotiating with the Israeli government on the issue. It was, he said, a political rather than a religious matter, and therefore he was pinning his hopes on the Egyptian Foreign Ministry to achieve a settlement.

"All the negotiations with the Israelis go through the Foreign Ministry," he explained, adding that Foreign Minister Amr Moussa maintained regular contact with Pope Shenouda.

Moussa stressed that the issue of the

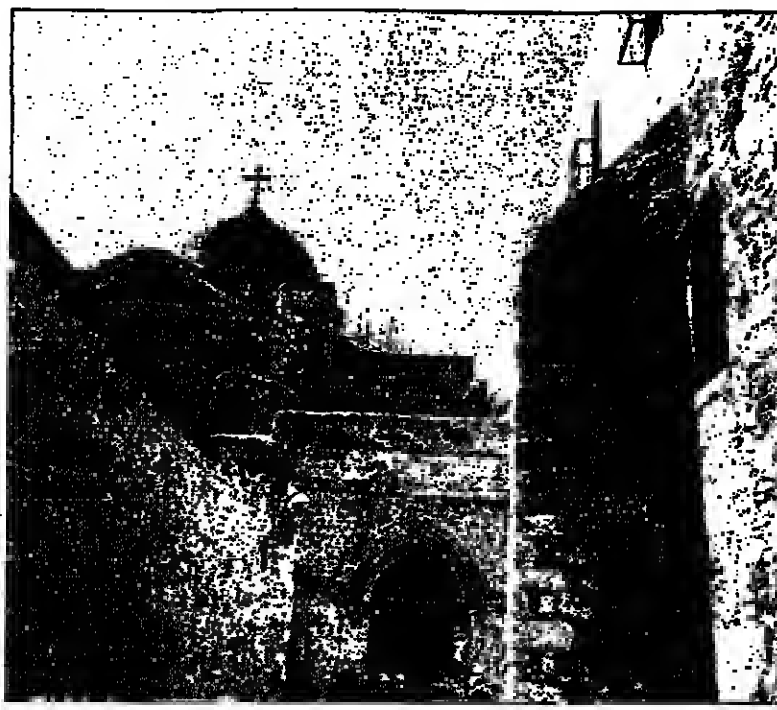


Photo: Antoine Albert

monastery has always been high on the agenda in talks between Israel and Egypt. Answering a query from an MP on the Israeli proposal, Moussa reiterated Egypt's total refusal of the scheme.

"This proposal means that the supervision of the monastery would be divided between the Coptic and Ethiopian monks, while Egypt strongly believes that the Copts should regain their hold on the monastery," Moussa said.

Ambassador Mohamed El-Dewany, head of the Israeli department at the Foreign Ministry, confirmed that while he did not have details of the Israeli proposal, the Church would have the final word on the issue.

The Ethiopians took over the monastery three years after Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza Strip in June 1967. In 1992 the Israeli Supreme Court ruled that the Copts have the right to reclaim the monastery, but the Israeli authorities have never implemented the decision.

According to Archbishop Abraham, there are 25 Ethiopian priests currently residing in Deir El-Sultan and just one Coptic priest. He alleged that some of the monastery's Coptic and Arabic inscriptions, which referred to its history, have been removed by the Ethiopians.

"We reported this attempt to wipe off the Arabic and Coptic inscriptions to the Israeli authorities, but our complaint fell on deaf ears," he said. Abraham is also unhappy about Ethiopian plans for

a massive restoration project.

The 1,800-square-metre monastery, which dates from the seventh century, links the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Since the Ethiopian takeover, the priests have had to walk through crowded *souqs* to make their way between the churches, and the archbishop said, "have sometimes been subject to harassment from Israeli soldiers, who claimed they were only keeping order".

In interviews with the press, Pope Shenouda has always maintained that the dispute was between the Egyptian Church and the Israelis, rather than the Ethiopians. Even when he signed an agreement with the Ethiopian Church in 1994 to include the Ethiopian patriarch's name in the prayers at certain feasts, he still ruled out the possibility of direct negotiations with the Ethiopians.

The dispute over Deir El-Sultan has also been the cause of conflict between the Egyptian pope and his government. Having concluded a peace treaty with Israel in 1979, the late President Anwar El-Sadat had hoped that a larger number of Copts would visit the holy shrines of Jerusalem. But to his dismay, Pope Shenouda imposed a ban on such visits until the Coptic Church regained Deir El-Sultan. In the ensuing acrimony, Sadat banished Pope Shenouda to a monastery in the Western Desert.

The Khartoum connection

Black flags were raised over the Appeals Prison this week as the death sentence was carried out against six Gama'a militants following a military trial, reports **Galal Nassar**

Six militants of the underground Al-Gama'a 'Al-Islamiya were executed by hanging on Sunday after being convicted and sentenced to January by the Supreme Military Court. They were found guilty as charged of membership of an illegal group which conspired to carry out terrorist attacks and assassinate public figures.

The six were among 24 militants who stood trial on the same charges in the "Returnees from Sudan" case, known as such because the defendants had received military training in a camp near the Sudanese capital, Khartoum.

In the trial, which opened in December, the military court sentenced eight other militants to 10 years imprisonment and seven to prison terms with hard labour ranging between one and 10 years. Three more defendants are on the run.

Those executed on Sunday were Ahmed Abdel-Aziz Fawaz, Hagag Gomaa Selim, Hassan El-Sayed El-Beheri, Zakaria Mohamed Beshir, Salah Saad Awad and Mustafa Abdel-Hamid. They represent the largest number of militants to be executed in a single case since President Hosni Mubarak started referring cases of terrorism to military trial in late 1992.

Fifty-six members of Al-Gama'a 'Al-Islamiya and Jihad have been executed so far, including the four Gama'a militants convicted of the attempted assassination of former Prime Minister Atef Sedki in 1994.

A top security source told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that the 24 militants on trial were the first dispatch of a group of 120 who received advanced military training in Sudan. They were led by Mustafa Hamza, described as the current military leader of Al-Gama'a 'Al-Islamiya. According to the source, the defendants' confessions revealed that Hamza had the full support of Hassan Al-Turabi, now speaker of the Sudanese parliament and leader of the National Islamic Front. The source said Turabi and Hamza met several times following the assassination attempt against President Hosni Mubarak in Addis Ababa last June to coordinate their activities and determine the kind of assistance the Gama'a needed to maintain its armed confrontation with the Egyptian government.

According to the source, Turabi also confirmed to Hamza that Khartoum would not hand over any of the militants involved in the attempt against Mubarak to Egypt or Ethiopia.

The United Nations Security Council imposed diplomatic sanctions against Sudan last January for refusing to hand over three men suspected of involvement in the attempt against Mubarak, including Hamza, to Addis Ababa.

The militants sentenced in January had provided details about Al-Mazraa camp, in forests near the capital Khartoum, where they received training on targets similar to those they planned to attack in Egypt, the security source said. These included plans of the houses of top government officials, including the presidential palace, their assassination plot against

Mubarak, the culmination of a series of planned attacks, was codenamed the "final operation".

The source told the *Weekly* that Hamza decided that this first dispatch of 24 militants would be sent to Cairo to attack important targets and installations. Had they succeeded in carrying out these attacks, a second group of 50 militants was to have been sent from Sudan to assassinate government ministers, including the ministers of interior, and foreign affairs. Opposition figures were also targeted. A third dispatch of another 50 militants would then have carried out the "final operation", which was to assassinate the president, the source said.

Military sources said that the court had considered the deterrent effect of capital punishment in passing the sentences, particularly in the light of the fact that around the time of the opening of the Returnees from Sudan trial, police arrested 56 members of the Jihad organisation. The 56, who included five Sudanese nationals, had also received military training in Sudan.

The sources said the group had been planning suicide attacks against government ministers, including Information Minister Safwat El-Sherif, Minister of Education Hussein Kamel Bahassein, Tourism Minister Mamdouh El-Beltagi and Culture Minister Farouq Hosni. The group accused the ministers of "corrupting citizens" and said they deserved to die because of their role in "fighting Muslim youth".

Jihad's first attack was to have been carried out during a parliamentary session where Mubarak was scheduled to give a speech, the source said. A car full of explosives was to be parked near the back-wall of the People's Assembly, in an area undergoing construction work. The group planned to detonate the explosives by remote control. However, the defendants were arrested before they had the chance to carry out their plan. They confessed that they had been acting under the orders of Jihad leader Ayman El-Zawahiri and that they had crossed the border to Egypt from Sudan.

At the military trial of the 24 Gama'a militants, the military prosecutor asked for the maximum penalty for all the defendants, saying there was sufficient evidence to condemn them to death. He said that the leader of the group, Fawaz, had confessed that he had received arms from Sudan, through the El-Besharya tribe, which lives on the border between Egypt and Sudan. He added that the Gama'a's terrorist plot had been exposed after the arrest of one of the defendants, Mohamed Abdel-Karim, while riding a bus from southern Egypt to Cairo carrying two submachine guns and five hand-grenades. Abdel-Karim had confessed to belonging to the Gama'a and told the security forces that the group's leadership was hiding out in the southern Egyptian city of Koto Omho near Aswan.

Brotherhood split on Centre group

El-Wasat, a political grouping seeking legal sanction, is facing a crisis following the exit of 20 of its Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated members on the instructions of the Brotherhood leadership. **Amira Howeidj reports**

The Wasat (Centre) group, established five months ago, and widely believed to be a front for the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood, may have lost its chance of ever becoming a legal political party after 20 of its members suddenly withdrew from the group. According to the Political Parties Law, a group seeking to become a legal party must have at least 50 registered members. With the arrest of three of its founders last month, the Centrists, who had 74 registered members (most of whom also belonged to the Muslim Brotherhood), are now left with only 51.

According to a lawyer close to the Brotherhood, the members resigned after coming under severe pressure from Brotherhood leaders, keen to prevent the group, which was established without their consent.

The proposal for a Centre party was presented on 10 January by Abdul-Ela Madi, assistant secretary-general of the Egyptian Syndicate and a leading member of the Brotherhood. Madi was arrested two months ago, along with 12 Brotherhood activists, including two who belonged to the Centre group. The 13 Brotherhood members were referred to military trial on 11 May.

"The whole thing is very confusing," commented Rafiq Habib, the Centrists' spokesman. Habib, a Protestant Christian, was one of two Christians who applied for the formation of the party. Abdul-Ela Madi's

arrest created the peculiar situation of leaving a Christian at the head of an Islamist political grouping.

"It has been said that the request to withdraw from membership was issued by the Brotherhood's Constituent Body, and not the General Guidance Bureau," Habib said.

According to the "Basic Organisational Law of the Public Body of the Muslim Brotherhood", the order, by which the outlawed Brotherhood is run, the group's main executive bodies are the Supreme Guide (the group's mentor), who is the overall leader of the group; beneath him is the General Guidance Bureau, the group's supreme executive body; finally there is the Constituent Body, which is the group's general (consultative) council and also forms the general assembly of the Guidance Bureau.

The Constituent Body, which consists of Supreme Guide Mustafa Mashhour, his deputy Mamoun El-Hodeibi, Ibrahim Sharaf and Ahmed Hassanain, is not authorised to issue decisions without the full approval of the General Guidance Bureau, "which explains why the orders were not official, but more like indirect requests", said Habib.

Mashhour, however, denies that he, or anyone else to the group, has pressured the Centre members. "Some of our youth element thought we had approved

the establishment of the party, and when they realised that this wasn't the case, they felt they had done wrong, so they decided to correct their mistake and withdraw from the Centre group," he told *Al-Ahram Weekly*. Mashhour said that although the "youth" had not received orders, "they took the initiative to maintain their positions within the Brotherhood".

Hodeibi made the same point, to rather harsher tones: "They are not legal minors, and if they decided to act as they did it was their own individual decision," he said.

But a source close to the group, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told the *Weekly* that, frustrated by Madi's failure to consult them over the Centre party project, Hodeibi had asked Madi and the other founders "not to go to the courts to contest the Political Parties Committee's decision to refuse [to license] the party," and had said that "enough is enough".

His request, however, was ignored, and the founders appealed to the Political Parties Court on 26 May. In realisation, said the source, Hodeibi threatened to resign from the Brotherhood unless a decision was made that all Brotherhood-affiliated members must leave the Centre group. This time, his request was heard and the Constituent Body issued its decision ordering Brotherhood members to resign from the Centre group.

According to Habib, however, only 20 out of the 50 Brotherhood-affiliated members responded, "and those 20 are not even among the active founders of the group". However, Habib added, the decision was only sent to the Brotherhood's branches in the governorates, and not to the Centre group's important members like lawyer Essam Sultan, who happens to be Hodeibi's son-in-law.

"So far, we are on the safe side as far as our membership numbers are concerned, but if more people decide to leave the party, then it will be different situation altogether," said Habib. Ironically, he added, the decision of the Constituent Body did not order the members to notify the Political Parties Committee of their withdrawal, "thus making the decision ineffective".

Although observers interpret this rift as a revolution inside the 68-year-old Brotherhood, Habib insists it is nothing more than an internal wrangle, a natural outcome of the decision to form a party without consulting the Guidance Bureau. "Madi was aware that he was breaking the group's statutes, but he gave priority to the project of the party. This does not mean that he has been disloyal to the Brotherhood."

As far as Rafiq El-Said, the assistant secretary-general of the leftist Tagammu Party who has written extensively on the Brotherhood, is concerned,

the whole thing is "a big act, which is not working out nicely for the Brotherhood". It comes as no surprise, says El-Said, that the group is issuing such contradictory statements "with the aim of using the situation to further its own interests". If the party fails to win legal existence, "they will say it was not a Brotherhood project. If it works, they will rush to be part of this quasi-Brotherhood party."

As far as the Centre group itself is concerned, El-Said said that the arrest of three of its Brotherhood-affiliated leading lights has "left the entire arena for Habib, who cannot be controlled by the Brotherhood". According to El-Said, the Brotherhood's leaders cannot tolerate "the Christianity of Habib or what he says". This leaves only three alternative scenarios: that Madi is acquitted, which is unlikely; that Habib is fired, which is impossible; or that the whole project is abandoned, which El-Said says is the most likely outcome.

Mashhour's analysis bears a certain similarity to Said's. "They [the Centre founders] should have known that the government would never allow them to establish a party despite the facade of a few Christians."

But Habib is not willing to give in. "We still believe in our project and we will continue to make every effort to get our party established."

Islamists in the mainstream?

Participants in a seminar on integrating "moderate" Islamist groups into mainstream political life agreed that mistrust and suspicion were the main obstacles, writes **Khaled Dawoud**

The bloody confrontation between governments and militant Islamists in Egypt, and several other Arab countries, has been associated with calls for dialogue with moderate Islamist groups, as a way to end the vicious cycle of violence and to foster a legitimate Islamist opposition bound by the rules of non-violence and political pluralism.

But is dialogue possible with groups which, many maintain, believe they have a prerogative on truth? And can a line be drawn between "terrorists" and "moderate" groups, like the Muslim Brotherhood, who claim to espouse democracy and non-violence?

A seminar organised by the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS) last week on the integration of moderate Islamist groups into the mainstream political system revealed that the same fears and suspicions which had halted previous attempts at dialogue still dogged the issue today.

The rise, and continued popularity, of Islamist groups in Arab countries since the mid-70s, has led many intellectuals, including seculars and leftists, to stress the need to draw a line between violent groups, like Al-Gama'a 'Al-Islamiya and Jihad, and other non-violent Islamist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood, which remains illegal in Egypt.

Dias Rashwan, an expert at the Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies, believes that

while it is clearly impossible to hold a dialogue with groups who adopt violence and consider anyone who disagrees with their fundamentalist beliefs as infidels, it could be possible to reach a common ground with the more moderate groups, which claim to accept principles of democracy and pluralism.

However, for other participants in the seminar, that kind of differentiation is dangerous. They consider that groups like the outlawed Brotherhood are merely playing lip service to democracy, and are in fact using the rhetoric of democracy to serve their ultimate purpose of seizing power. If they were ever able to take power, there would be no democracy or respect of human rights, and religion would be used to justify their tyranny. For these analysts, this is a clear argument against allowing groups like the Brotherhood a voice in mainstream politics.

In his introduction to the seminar, Mohamed El-Sayed Said, deputy director of the Al-Ahram Centre for Political Strategic Studies, as well as deputy director of CIHRS, said that "there is a need to resume the renaissance project which began late last century," he said, but in order to do this we have a reach a suitable political formula which is able to overcome the present crisis."

Reflecting the well-established view that the experience of building the modern nation state in the

Arab world on the basis of secular principles has failed to meet the demands of the people or solve their problems, Said said there was a need for "a new social contract and a historic compromise within Arab societies."

He stressed that "The Islamic component in Arab culture, the role which political Islamic groups have played in the national struggle and their stand against Zionism cannot be ignored."

But what must not be compromised on in any dialogue with Islamist groups, Said said, was that "human rights, women's rights, the forbidding of violence and the respect of freedom of expression and democracy must be upheld".

Fouad Zakaria, a prominent professor of philosophy who has participated in several debates with leading Islamist figures over controversial issues, said that his experience and knowledge of those groups led him to believe that "there was something built into their ideology which makes them reject dialogue as a matter of principle, since they believe they have the ultimate truth. Any party which believes it has the ultimate truth cannot participate in dialogue."

Even the names of the groups indicated that their members felt they were "a chosen group with a special status, while the rest of the people were infidels". The slogan "Islam is the solution", used by the Brotherhood in their election campaigns, Zakaria

said, was an expression of the group's belief that they had the "right" understanding of Islam, while anyone who did not join their group was not a true Muslim.

In Zakaria's view, dialogue with Islamist groups was also doomed to failure because their frame of reference was so different. "In any dialogue with Islamists, they resort to the authority of the text (the Qur'an), and not to rationalism and logic. I am not saying that the text has no logic or rationale, but the fact that those groups believe in the absolute authority of the text leaves no room for discussion, because it becomes a process of the Islamists trying to corner the other party and portray it as not believing in the holy text."

Even if one was able to overcome these two sticking points, he added, he could not accept the violence which he believes has proved an integral part of the ideology of political Islamic groups. He cited the case of the assassination of secularist thinker Farag Foda by members of Al-Gama'a 'Al-Islamiya in 1992. The support this act gained from other so-called moderate groups, whether hidden or explicit, made him decide that he would never attempt a dialogue with them again.

"This man was killed because he conducted a dialogue with leaders of this trend, and managed to beat them. Their leaders have persecuted him even after his death and during the trial of his assassins."

Zakaria said, referring to the testimony of the late Sheikh Mohamed El-Gazali, who maintained that as an apostate, Foda had deserved to die. If the government was not able to carry out such a punishment, it was the right of any Muslim to implement it, and that person should not be punished.

"So far, I have not heard any strong condemnation by the so-called moderate groups of the acts of violence and killing which have so damaged the reputation of Islam," he said. He also pointed to militant action against Egypt's Copts as yet another indication confirming that dialogue with these groups was neither possible nor useful.

Zakaria's views were countered by Rafiq Habib, a Protestant whose name has been in the news recently as a member of the Muslim Brotherhood-dominated Al-Wasat (Centre) group, which attempted to establish itself as an official political party. To Habib, his group is a practical implementation of the concept of integrating "moderate" Islamist groups, and promoting the principle of peaceful coexistence of different groups in society.

EOHR slams Fayoum prison

In its fourth report on deteriorating prison conditions and the maltreatment of prisoners in Egypt, the Egyptian Organisation for Human Rights (EOHR) drew attention to the case of Fayoum Prison, where dozens of suspected Muslim militants are held on charges of carrying out violent attacks.

The report criticised, in particular, alleged violations by security officers against detainees, including the use of torture as a punishment.

Despite the human rights guarantees contained in the Egyptian Constitution, the report said, abuses are still being recorded in Fayoum Prison and a number of basic rights continue to be violated. "Prison inmates are subjected to various forms of ill-treatment, such as deteriorating living conditions, lack of medical care, the banning of visits, and denial of the right to education," the report said.

In an interview with *Al-Ahram Weekly*, however, a top-ranking security official, who asked not to be named in accordance with Interior Ministry regulations, denied the EOHR's charges, describing them as, at best, exaggerations. "The information in that report was obtained from prisoners and detainees who have an obvious interest in levelling accusations against the security bodies," the official said.

In response to charges in the report that poor health conditions and torture have led to death of an unspecified number of detainees,

A senior security official denied charges raised in a recent report by the Egyptian Organisation for Human Rights on deteriorating conditions in Fayoum Prison, reports **Jailan Halawji**

the official said that, "the demise of a prisoner to jail should not always be interpreted as death due to police torture. However, the family and friends of the dead prisoners like to claim that they were killed by the police."

The security official admitted that certain officers might commit what he labeled as "excesses". But he denied that this was the general rule. "The prisons are open to investigation by independent judicial bodies. These bodies could easily be approached by anyone claiming he was tortured, or by their families, who also have the right to file complaints," he said.

The official added that the Interior Ministry treats torture allegations seriously, and has its own disciplinary body to investigate alleged human rights violations. If a police officer was found guilty of an offence against human rights, he would be referred to a court, which would have the final word on the case.

The EOHR report said that it has received information confirming that since the opening of Fayoum Prison to May of last year, the prison administration and other security bodies

have been involved in carrying out acts of collective punishment against prisoners.

"Some testimonies we received assert that the prison administration often carry out disciplinary campaigns against prisoners, sometimes on a daily basis," the report said.

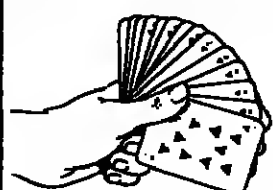
The security source insisted, however, that such disciplinary campaigns, when prison officers conduct unexpected cell and body searches, are limited to preventative measures to thwart plans for riots and other forms of disorder.

Meanwhile, the EOHR report noted that although Fayoum Prison has been open for under a year, an Interior Ministry ban on visits by both family members or lawyers imposed on certain prisoners since 1993, has been implemented at Fayoum as well.

The security source told the *Weekly* that the ban had been enforced for security reasons, especially after investigations proved that jailed terrorist leaders used visits to convey instructions to their members outside, ordering them to carry out more attacks against public figures and the police. The source added that several defence lawyers visiting prisoners had been convicted of the same charge.

Edited by **Wadie Kirolos**

Successful partnerships are based on good communications.



Israel's painful paradox

To form a coalition government, Netanyahu will have to woo even more extreme bed-fellows. Hassan Fouad from Jerusalem profiles some of the Right-wing parties Netanyahu has to choose from



Preliminary results of the Israeli Knesset elections show that the religious parties have secured 23 of the 120 Knesset seats. In the event that Netanyahu does not establish a national unity government with Labour, he will be compelled to draw the religious parties into his new coalition. The merger of the Geshet and the Tsomet bloc into the Likud has given him 32 seats. However, he needs some 30 more to form the coalition. Twenty-three of these would come from the religious parties, while the remainder will be drawn from the ranks of extremist national parties such as the Moleket Party, which advocates the expulsion of all Arabs from Israel, the Occupied Territories and relocating in their place, Jewish immigrants. The out-going Labour government failed to recruit members of these religious parties in its coalition as a result of deep ideological chasms between Labour and the right-wing religious parties.

During the electoral campaign, rabbis had instructed members of the religious parties to vote for Netanyahu, thereby leaving him indebted to these groups. However, the members of the religious right-wing are out of one mind and represent a broad ideological spectrum. At one extreme are the ultra-orthodox, hard-line Jews who staunchly apply the Mosaic law. At the other pole are groups of observant Jews. The rivalry between leaders of these various groups dates back more than two centuries.

In addition to religious differences, Israeli society is divided along ethnic lines. The Ashkenazi Jews are those who came to Israel from Western countries while the Sephardis are immigrants from Spain, North Africa and eastern countries.

Consequently, Netanyahu will undoubtedly find it difficult to form his coalition government, particularly when it comes to assigning ministerial posts equally between the various religious groups. While the National Religious Party consists overwhelmingly of Ashkenazis, the Shas bloc is made up mostly of Sephardis. The "traditional Jews" are another group whose pattern of life consists of "going to the synagogue in the morning and to the football match in the afternoon."

The remaining 40 percent of the Israeli population may be classified as secular, and a percentage of them, atheist, as were the founding fathers of the state of Israel, including David Ben-Gurion himself.

It is this paradox inherent in Israeli society, as reflected by the split in the electoral ideology that will pose problems for Netanyahu. The paradox is that it was the "seculars" who established Israel as a state for the Jews. The founders of Israel sought to draw the diaspora Jews to a newly-founded homeland where they would enjoy citizenship.

A few years after the establishment of the state of Israel, Uri Avneri, the journalist and Knesset member who had been a general in the Israeli army during the 1948 war with the Arabs, published his book, *Israel without Zionism*. From 1948 to the middle of 1977, Israel was governed by a succession of coalition governments dominated by the Labour Party. Despite the involvement of the religious parties in the coalition governments, the predominant political trend was secular.

However, concern over the future of the state emerged in the wake of the Six Day War in June, 1967. Israel had found itself occupying an area that was more than eight times its own size and administering an Arab population estimated at 800,000, who lived in the West Bank and Gaza. Since then, the Arab population has grown to about 2 million while Israel's population currently stands at roughly 5 million.

With the arrival of the Likud to the seat of governmental power, the voices of the religious right were raised in fear of the threat posed to Israel by the growing Arab population under Israeli rule. This fear was exacerbated by the fact that the growth rate of the Arab population far exceeds that of the Jews. According to statistical forecasts, the Arab population, in less than 40 years, will exceed the Jewish population in Israel proper. Jews will become a minority in their "homeland" — a fact which could turn Israel into a state of Arabs.

A prominent figure in the Yemin Israel Party pointed out that the Israeli government has, year after year, been helpless in tackling the three per cent annual increase in population growth rates among Arabs over Israelis. The new legislation adopted in Israel, which provides allowances for each new child born to an Arab or Jewish family, he said, seems to encourage the Arabs more than the Jews to have children.

It is clear why the Jewish religious parties would be more fearful than other parties of this "danger". In a seminar held by the Israeli Information Organisation only 48 hours before the votes were cast, during a forum where representatives of political parties stated their programmes, Shean Kaspar, the Moleket Party's representative said, "We did not come to the land of Israel to raise funds for the Palestinians, nor to allow the Palestinians to dump their agricultural products into the Israeli market. We must tell Palestinians that this land belongs to the Jews, and that we will never abandon our land. There are 20 Arab countries to which they could go, but for us, we have only one Israel." He added, "The coming period will be extremely difficult. The deterioration of the economic situation in Gaza, will drive more Palestinians to join the ranks of Hamas. We should create an economic situation conducive for the Arabs to leave Israel. They have ample job opportunities in other Arab countries. We do not advocate their expulsion by force. Palestinians constitute more than half the population of Jordan, we did not expel them to Jordan. We must separate the Jewish nation from the Arab nation. They must exist separately on either side of the River Jordan."

The Moleket Party is opposed to the principle of "land for peace", and instead raises the banner of "peace for peace". It argues that "we can not achieve peace by appeasing the enemy." Moleket does not recognise the Palestine Liberation Organisation, nor the State of Palestine. It will not talk to Yasser Arafat, whom it considers to be a war criminal.

The Moleket Party will join the Likud coalition on condition that the party is assigned the posts of a minister and a deputy-minister. "We are the only party which has not compromised its principles" stated Kaspar. Rehavam Ze'evi, the leader of Moleket, was one of the most dynamic and prolific speakers in the out-going parliament, and was Moleket's only remaining representative there. The party originally had three seats in the last Knesset, but one resigned and another broke away to establish the Yemin Israel, which considers itself to be the only Right-wing party in Israel. After the elections, however, Moleket now has two seats in the Knesset.

It is from the ranks of such parties that Netanyahu may draw support for his new coalition cabinet; that is, if he banishes the possibility of establishing a national unity government with Labour.

The PNA's spilt milk

With Netanyahu in power, Palestinian officials feel, writes Tarek Hassan from Gaza, that whatever progress they made is now in limbo

Netanyahu and his Right-wing coalition's rise to power in Israel has sent shock waves through the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). Many PNA officials believe that Peres and Labour would have been better travelling companions down the rocky road of Palestinian-Israeli peace negotiations, than Netanyahu and cohorts will be. Even the most optimistic of the Palestinians who now argue that a complete U-turn by Netanyahu on the peace road is difficult, would admit that any progress, over the next four years, toward an independent Palestinian state, is impossible. The best they can hope for is maintaining the status quo: limited self-rule in Gaza and the West Bank. Other Palestinian officials are now stressing the need to find some way of dealing with the Likud and its allies, arguing that the next stage will be marked by an antagonism between the Palestinians and the Jews, rather than the earlier attempts at co-existence. Such a climate is bound to negatively affect the peace process.

On their part, many Palestinian analysts and intellectuals are now blaming the PNA for laying all its eggs in Labour's basket, and for its inability to understand the intricacies of Israeli domestic policy. Salafiah Hegawi, chairperson of the Palestinian Planning Centre (a PLO centre) said, "We have to admit that it was us, the Arabs, who brought down Peres and Labour, and equally, it is us who brought the Likud to power when we allowed the first bombing operation, after the signing of the Oslo Accords, to take place under our nose." Hegawi added, "From the moment the very first operation following Oslo took place, the Israelis became the sole interpreter of the Oslo Agreement, and we became hostages... Now the new Israeli prime minister may announce his commitment to the agreement, but he will interpret every article of that agreement from his own perspective, not from a common one. The dynamism at the heart of the Oslo agreement is dead by now, or at least paralysed."

What bothers Hegawi most is that, "It's business as usual for the Palestinians. Once again we hear some saying, 'And what did we gain from Labour,' while others whisper, 'Surely America cannot allow the breakdown of the agreement.'"

The official Palestinian position, however, remains one of "wait and see," as last Friday's meeting of the Palestinian cabinet and PLO's Executive Committee shows. While Arafat did not issue any statement congratulating Netanyahu on his electoral victory, the statement released following the

meeting implied the need for an exerted Arab and international pressure on the new Israeli prime minister.

During that same meeting, harsh criticism was voiced against the Palestinian negotiation team. The negotiators heard some of those present in the meeting accuse them of having formed friendships with their Israeli counterparts at the expense of serious negotiations, and that some of the Palestinian negotiators spent most of their time chatting and holding special sessions with the Israelis. Some of the members of the team were also accused of never submitting a report about the discussions they held with Israelis, deeming them private business.

One cabinet minister was reported to have said to the negotiating team during the meeting, "Thank God Labour is now out of power, for it appears that we were negotiating with friends. Perhaps now it will dawn on us that we are dealing with enemies, and that everything must be in order and in writing."

Those who participated in that meeting were instructed by Arafat to refrain from issuing any statements to the press until the situation in Israel became clear. However, Palestinian Council Speaker Ahmed Korei, who was present in that meeting, made a public statement

urging the necessity of formulating a new Palestinian negotiating strategy, as well as a change in the style of negotiations and even the members of the negotiations team.

Parallel to the meeting, Abu Mazen's men, who form the present negotiating team, were heavily engaged in trying to extract from Peres a decision to carry on with the redeployment in Hebron before he officially leaves the premiership. Peres was reluctant. Instead he issued a statement confirming Israel's commitment to the agreement, leaving the task of redeployment to his successor.

However, no one on the Palestinian side is sure as to whether Netanyahu will order the Hebron redeployment. In every likelihood, Netanyahu's decisions will continue to be a source of confusion for Arafat, and his men, for some time to come. Analysts predict at least another year of uncertainty, primarily because the US' elections are around the corner. If the Democrats win, they may need some more time before they throw their weight behind the peace process they engineered. But, if the Republicans win, the Palestinian issue will enter a dark tunnel.

Another important factor that may decide the fate of the current peace process, and that of Arafat and his supporters along with it, is the Russian elections.

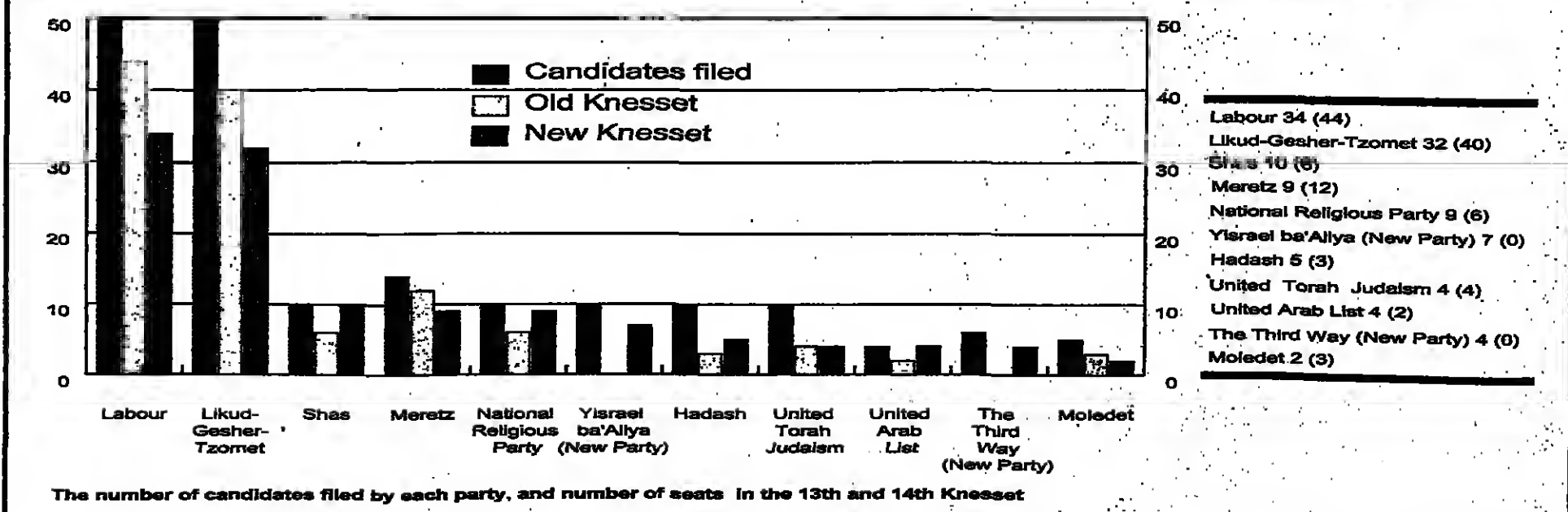
Should Yeltsin lose the elections in Russia, the US may have to rearrange its foreign policy priorities, thereby demoting the Middle East, in terms of priority, in favour of Russia.

What little room for manoeuvring that Arafat has until these issues are resolved can be exerted on the Arab front. He will do his best to emerge from the Agaba tripartite summit with Egypt and Jordan with a commitment from Jordan's King Hussein that he will back Arafat after Likud takes over, and that he will not compete with him for representation of the Palestinians.

In short, however, Arafat and the PNA have lost what little ability they had to influence events on the Israeli domestic political arena. They will now have to try and mobilise whatever support they have on the Arab and international fronts to put pressure on Israel to complete the Hebron redeployment, return to the table for the final status negotiations and give concessions at the negotiations commensurate with Arafat's ambitions for a Palestinian state. Will he succeed? The only thing that is certain is that there will be a state of war, albeit cold, between the Palestinian Authority and the coalition in power in Israel—the war cry being, peace negotiations.



Palestinian children cross the path of an Israeli soldier and a settler boy in Hebron. Netanyahu is yet to decide if and when Israeli troops will withdraw from the city (photo: AFP)



Netanyahu's visions of 'peace'

Likud's vision of self-government for the Palestinians coupled with settlement expansions rule out a just agreement, writes Graham Usher from Jerusalem

Throughout the election campaign the Likud leader insisted that a government led by him would be bound by all international (i.e. Oslo) agreements signed between Israel and the Palestinians. But he also made it clear that he viewed the "Hebron issue" as an "exception" that would be better left to the final status talks.

It is a position shared by a reinvigorated settler movement in the West Bank and Gaza, nine of whose representatives are now Knesset members, including five from the National Religious Party (NRP) — the ultra-nationalist movement which, with nine seats, will form a central plank of any future Likud coalition. If Netanyahu does move on Hebron, it is likely to be due to US pressure rather than international commitments.

In the week since his triumph, Netanyahu has been at pains to strike the pose of a statesman, extending his hand (as he put it during his victory speech in Jerusalem on 2 June) "to all Arab leaders... and the Palestinians to join us... in the path of real peace". But the vision the Likud leader promulgated during the elections augurs

nothing but peace, neither for the Palestinians nor for the Arab states.

In campaign rallies across Israel, Netanyahu was lucid as to how he would solve the Palestinian problem as Israel's next prime minister. While a Likud government would proceed with the final status negotiations (as a "fact that cannot be ignored"), not only would Jerusalem remain "the eternal undivided capital of the Jewish people", all PLO institutions in the city, including Orient House, would be closed down. On security, the Israeli army would have "freedom of action" everywhere in the Occupied Territories, including inside the seven autonomous areas currently under the PA's jurisdiction. But it is Netanyahu's line on settlements that poses the gravest threat to any notion of a just peace.

On 30 May — in an interview with Israeli radio recorded prior to the elections results — Netanyahu said that his preferred scenario for the West Bank was a return to the "Camp David and Madrid" formulation where Palestinian au-

tonomous areas exist side by side with "Jewish security and settlement zones". These coincide with what is now Area C land in the West Bank, as demarcated by the Oslo II Agreement signed between the PLO and Israel last September — zones which are under exclusive Israeli control, house less than 100 Palestinian villages but which comprise a colossal 70 per cent of all West Bank territory. It is these areas, say Israeli sources, that Netanyahu will target over the next four years to "thicken" existing settlements in the West Bank by "doubling" the present settler population of 347,000. The price tag (according to a plan submitted by one settler group) is a cool \$3.7 billion, most of it private money raised in the Jewish diaspora.

What the Palestinians will be left with is broadly what they have, seven or eight autonomous areas (excluding Jerusalem) constituting around 28 per cent of the West Bank. Netanyahu offers this as "self government", in which Palestinians "have the opportunity to run every aspect of their lives except for security

and foreign relations". Should the Palestinians accede to this status of permanent statelessness, they will find in Likud a "fair and reasonable partner". Should they not accede, they will "adjust", says Netanyahu.

But it is wholly likely that neither the Palestinians nor the Arabs could countenance such a final settlement. Yet it is also clear that if they are to resist Netanyahu's plans they must be ready to go beyond mere diplomacy, critical though a united Arab stance is.

For Palestinian Legislative Council member, Hanan Ashrawi, the post-Peres era requires "a bold and meticulous strategy to confront all outcomes of future negotiations with Israel", involving not just "diplomatic intervention" but also "public resistance". If some sort of international consensus is still to be mobilised around Palestinian claims to self-determination and statehood, then Netanyahu and Likud's visions of self government coupled with massive Jewish settlement must be combated on the ground as much as at the negotiating table.

Waiting for Bibi

The Clinton administration has greeted "Bibi" Netanyahu's victory with thinly veiled concern, reports Hoda Tawfik from Washington

The call from Washington is to wait and see what Binyamin Netanyahu, Israeli prime minister-elect, will do. The Clinton administration has not yet recovered from the shock created by the results of the Israeli elections, which brought Likud, religious parties and the extreme Right to power.

There seems to be complete disarray inside the administration about how to deal with the new reality in Israel. Washington is torn between respect for the workings of the people's will in Israel, a country that enjoys great American favour, and scarcely concealed concern lest "Bibi" Netanyahu harm a Middle East diplomatic initiative in which the United States and President Bill Clinton have made a very large investment.

"There is no evidence that many Israelis considered the Peres visit to Washington in late April to be a significant factor in making their decisions," analyst David Pollock told *Al-Ahram Weekly*.

Richard Murphy, former assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs (1983-1989), said, "Netanyahu has not hesitated in the past, when it suited his purposes, to be rough-tongued about America's Middle East policy, and he well knows that he was not Washington's preferred candidate."

The reaction from the Arab world is a major worry to the administration. But the only prescription from the administration has been "wait until Clinton meets Netanyahu", even though the administration does not know how it will handle explosive issues like more settlements being built on Palestinian land.

There is already an indication of a possible clash between Washington and Netanyahu over redeployment from Hebron. Secretary of State Warren Christopher stated that redeployment from Hebron is an obligation in the Oslo II Agreement.

Christopher had suggested that the US administration's policy might "adapt" to the new situation. But this statement was quickly withdrawn and replaced with a confirmation that there would be no change in the administration's position regarding settlements.

Middle East expert Judith Kipper told the *Weekly* that although there might be a confrontation between America and Israel in the long run, neither side was interested in a clash right now.

Meanwhile, Newt Gingrich, speaker of the House of Representatives, criticised Clinton's support of Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres as "very dangerous". He said, "I think the government the American people chooses should have a very good relationship with the government the people of Israel chooses."

Arabs shocked into action

Official and opposition views in the Arab world find common ground in their caution and scepticism over the future of the peace process in light of Netanyahu's hard-line position on issues vital to comprehensive peace in the region

Since Binyamin Netanyahu's victory in last week's Israeli elections, Arab governments, not least those directly connected to the peace process, have begun to coordinate their efforts to confront the hard-line stance of the incoming Israeli government.

Behind the "wait and see approach", pending the formation of a new Israeli cabinet within the period of 45 days after the elections, a flurry of diplomatic activity galvanised official circles in the Arab world.

There were bilateral discussions on the presidential level between Syria and Egypt, and Syria and Lebanon; a tripartite presidential summit in Aqaba between Egypt, Jordan and the Palestinians yesterday; and a tripartite Egyptian, Syrian and Saudi presidential meeting is to be held in Riyadh tomorrow.

The Lebanese *As-Safir* newspaper said in an editorial, "The tripartite summit to be held in Riyadh is an important move towards the path of resistance and a meeting ground for those who have not rushed [into normalisation], or those who want to stop rushing, upon discovering suddenly that they were running towards an abyss."

Those Arab countries which have made strides in normalising relations with Israel have also dis-

played a willingness to slow down the process. Qatar said on Monday that it will have to move cautiously, or slow down the pace of normalisation, to ensure that the new regime in Israel is serious about achieving peace with Arabs on all tracks.

Even without a Likud victory, events preceding the outcome of the elections boded ill for the peace process. The Syrian and Lebanese tracks were already stalled. Since a ceasefire was brokered in Lebanon on 27 April, three civilians were killed. Moreover, the Palestinian track was already derailed by the protracted closure of the West Bank and Gaza.

To many, therefore, the elections results did not come as a surprise. Haider Abdul-Shafi, a Palestinian legislative council member, told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that Israel had actually implemented policies on the ground before and after Oslo to ensure it claimed territorial rights in occupied territories. "Israel has violated the peace process ever since it started," Abdul-Shafi said. He believes that with the

expansion of settlements in Hebron and Jerusalem the peace process had already lost a great deal of its credibility.

"The redeployment of forces from Hebron is now postponed. The Israelis will remain in the centre of Hebron, so what is the importance of this process called redeployment," he asked.

There appears now to be a greater convergence of views between the Arab pro-peace process camp and their opponents. Farouq Qaddoumi, the PLO foreign minister based in Tunis who was in Egypt recently, told the *Weekly* that he discussed with Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Moussa Arab mobilisation to confront the rise of Israeli Right-wing extremist forces. "The timely meetings in Cairo between the presidents of Egypt and Syria, and other political actions, indicate a serious Arab will to achieve a just and peaceful settlement."

Qaddoumi said that "Likud does not recognise the PLO, and brands the PLO and its leaders as terrorists. Netanyahu has gone against the previous mutual recognition between Israel and the

PLO. Likud is therefore abandoning all agreements between the PLO and Labour. The peaceful settlement is frozen."

Adel-Aziz Ali Shamine, the former founding member of Fatah and now a member of the Palestinian cabinet who was in Cairo recently, told the *Weekly* that the PLO-Israeli peace agreements contain ambiguous points that are open to various interpretations.

"Netanyahu was brought up on a revisionist Zionist ideology that denies Palestinians any territorial or historical rights," said Shamine. "The Jewish electorate proved that they prefer tougher security measures, even if these measures are at the expense of the agreements with the Palestinians. Likud does not oppose agreements with Arab countries, but they cannot diverge from the beliefs of Menachem Begin who was never prepared to contemplate more than autonomy for Palestinians in the West Bank," continued Shamine.

In other words, predicted Shamine, one Israeli phase has ended and a new one has emerged that will lead to many dramatic changes. "The application of the peace

agreements will change. This will be based on Right-wing Zionist ideology and not on Zionist pragmatism," he commented.

The movements which have maintained active resistance to the Israeli occupation in Palestinian territories have pronounced their prognosis of gloom over the future of the peace process. Hamas' spokesman in Gaza, Mahmoud Zahar, said that neither Likud nor Labour were ever going to do anything for the Palestinians. "How can Netanyahu be worse than what Peres has been for the Palestinians?" Zahar asked.

The Damascus-based Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine said that as a result of the government's shift to the extreme right, "the political landscape looks black in Israel".

There are growing calls for the co-sponsors of the peace process, the US and Russia, the European powers and the United Nations, to intervene and contribute effectively to the process. "This can only be done by ensuring that efforts are based on international legitimacy and a commitment to the principles originally agreed upon in Madrid," said Qaddoumi to the *Weekly*.

Reported by Samia Nikumeh, Sherine Bahar and Rasha Saad

Turbulence in Bahrain

Bahraini authorities this week accused a locally based Hezbollah of plotting to oust the government. Pernille Bramming in Manama looks at why discontent is rising in the Gulf nation

Political tension in Bahrain grew further this week after the information minister of the small Arabian Gulf nation declared on Monday that the authorities had discovered a plan to topple the government. The minister said that the military wing of Hezbollah in Bahrain aimed to overthrow the present rulers through an armed revolution and install an Iran-backed government.

Twenty-nine Bahrainis have confessed to taking part in the plans and several other suspects are being interrogated, the information minister said.

The government of Bahrain, which has been ruled by the Al-Khalifa family since 1783, has continually accused Iran of instigating the political troubles which have hit the country during the last 18 months. At least 25 people have lost their lives during clashes with the security police and more than 2,500 people — mostly young Shi'a Muslims — have been arrested and accused of taking part in demonstrations, throwing primitive firebombs and sabotaging electrical installations. Around 1,000 members of the Bahraini opposition have fled or been deported by the authorities.

It is widely believed that while Iran probably is supporting some of Bahrain's Shi'a Muslim organisations, as it has always done even during the time of the shehs, this is insufficient to explain the unrest.

Although Bahrain's development since it discovered oil 60 years ago has been impressive and all the statistics point in the right direction, a growing number of Bahrainis would like to see a more democratic political system in place. They are demanding that the emir, Sheikh Eissa Al-Khalifa, reinstate the parliament, which he dissolved in 1975.

There has been a strong demand for democracy ever since 1975, but it was only in the beginning of the 1990s that the barrier of fear was broken and people started criticising. "Before, everybody was too afraid. Now we are all discussing the lack of political rights and press freedom, and this is the very positive aspect of the development," a Bahraini academic told *Al-Ahram Weekly*.

The negative aspect is the violence. What started as a peaceful, almost harmless movement for democracy, in which groups of prominent Bahrainis sent petitions to the emir, has now developed into a dangerous spiral of violence.

Outside the capital Manama, in the villages which have nowadays almost developed into the city's suburbs, old houses in which up to five families dispute the rooms and share the only kitchen and bathroom, exist side by side with new shining white luxury villas. It is here that you find the 15 per cent of the population of 360,000 who are receiving a monthly social insurance of 24 Bahraini dinars (\$64) and thus live in destitution. Many other Bahrainis are having to tighten their belts as the country's unemployment rate reaches 15-20 per cent.

Most of these people belong to the Shi'a Muslim majority — 65 per cent of the population — while the rest, including the Al-Khalifa family, are Sunni Muslims. Shi'ites complain about discrimination, which they say bars them from working in most of the ministries as well as the police and armed forces, the two latter being composed of Palestinians, Jordanians and Yemeni guest workers. The 212,000 foreigners in Bahrain make up 60 per cent of the workforce.

"We ask to be respected. Our biggest problem is not money and unemployment; it is the lack of freedom and respect towards the citizens," a young man in a village outside Manama told the *Weekly*. Everywhere in the village the walls are covered with graffiti, pronouncing slogans like "freedom", "parliament" and "all we ask is fulfilment of the constitution".

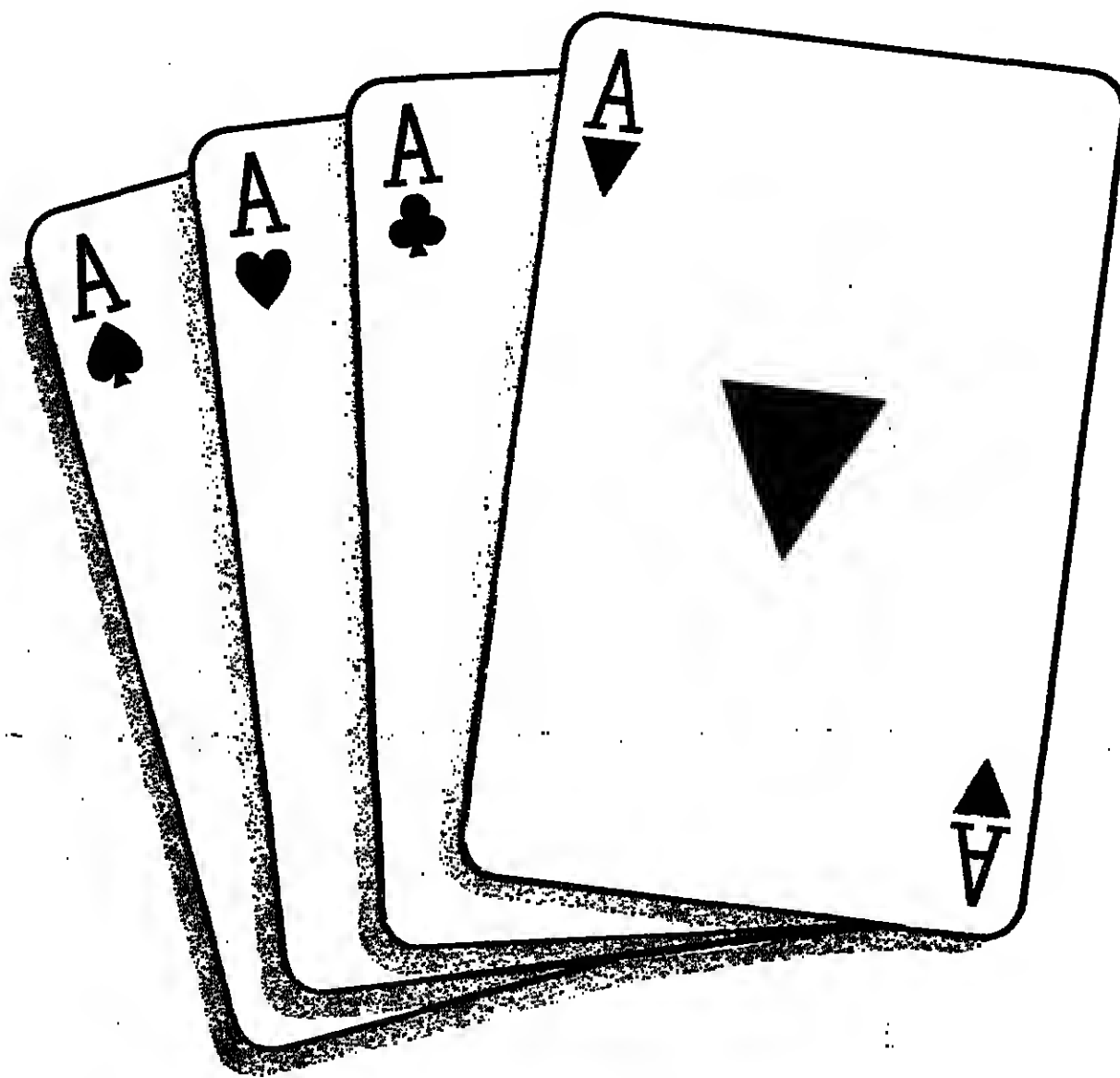
"In the media it's just a big party. They never write anything about the problems of our society. There are never any programmes on television or radio talking about what is going on," the villager said angrily. "This is why we are calling for the parliament to be reopened. The parliament represents the people. They can make sure that the government sticks to the law and the constitution and watch how it spends the money."

Anger is growing, as is religious fundamentalism. Some imams during the Friday sermons now play political tunes and Shi'a fundamentalism is on the rise, even though there seem to be no efficient organisations yet. "If the government does not want any Iranian involvement, they should open a dialogue with the opposition and start to solve the problems instead of increasing them by resorting to repression," a Bahraini academic told the *Weekly*.

"For the moment we are standing together, because all of us want democracy and freedom. But it is clear that some Shi'ites have another agenda: they emphasise religion even though they are pragmatic and know that it is impossible to create an Islamic state modelled on Iran in Bahrain," he added.

Lately, there have been signs of a coming change. Last Saturday the emir declared that he wanted to develop the Shura Council, which is made up of 30 appointed members, into a decision-making body in partnership with the government.

It is believed that Saudi Arabia and the United States will support certain changes, since it is crucial for them that stability is maintained in Bahrain. The US could be affected, since its strategically important Gulf fleet has its headquarters in Bahrain, from where it keeps an eye on Iraq and Iran.



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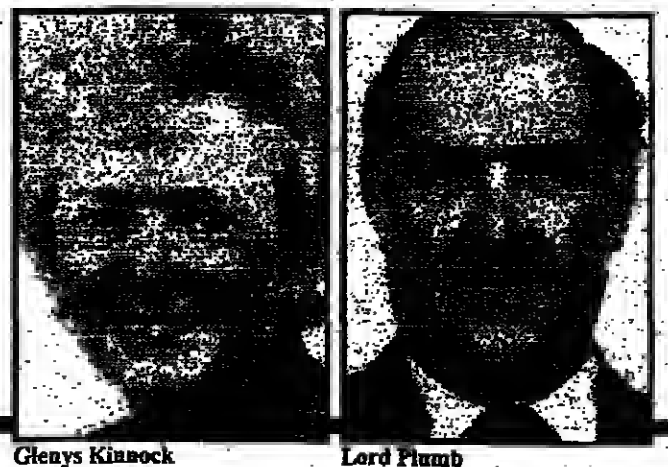


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Two pints and a packet of crisps

There are those in Brussels and Strasbourg who look beyond Fortress Europe and actually feel for Africa. But can they make a difference, wonders Gamal Nkrumah



Glenys Kinnock

Lord Plumb

She is Welsh and working class. He is English and upper class. She is socialist and he is not. He is a veteran Conservative and she is the wife of a Labour leader who tried in vain to oust Margaret Thatcher. She is also a Labour Party stalwart in her own right — some would dare say a trifle more charismatic than her husband. She is Glenys Kinnock. He is Lord Plumb.

They are both members of the European Parliament and shuttle between Brussels, Strasbourg and their constituencies in Britain. They are also frequent visitors of Africa. They come from opposite ends of the political spectrum in Britain, but they have both acquired a taste for Europe and a feeling for Africa. Their horizons are global.

Kinnock is, by all accounts, one of the most active members of the European Parliament's Committee on Development and Cooperation. Lord Plumb is the head of the European Parliament's Committee on African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) states. Both Kinnock and Lord Plumb were in the Namibian capital, Windhoek, recently to attend a joint meeting of ACP and European Union parliamentarians. When I ran into Kinnock in the corridors of the European Parliament in Strasbourg, she was just back from a trip to South Africa where she attended a conference on disseminating information to the South, in Midrand on the outskirts of Johannesburg.

In one respect Kinnock and Plumb are more like each other than like most other Members of the European Parliament (MEPs): they both have a soft spot for Africa and have taken a keen interest in Third World development issues. "We are, of course, very concerned about what everybody calls post-Lome," Kinnock noted. "I very much want to protect the basis of the Lome Convention."

So what is the Lome Convention? The first cooperation agreement between the European Community (as the EU was called then) and ACP states was signed in the Togolese capital Lome in 1975. "The Lome Convention is the finest and most complete instrument of North-South cooperation ever. Between them, the 70 ACP and 15 EU states account for some 17 per cent of the global population and almost half of the membership of the United Nations," Lord Plumb explained. "Through the Lome Convention, they participate in the world's largest and most comprehensive development system outside the UN system. The originality of the EU's relationship with the ACP countries lies above all in its multilateral nature. When money is tight and aid budgets are under pressure, the case for the multilateral approach as set out in the Lome Convention is further strengthened."

Once Europe and Africa looked made for each other. But, today, an uncertain future suggests that the relationship was always destined to be rocky. There are fears in Africa that Europe has shifted its attention east-

wards. "I am concerned that the priorities of Europe have moved away from Africa," Kinnock said. "I am concerned that our interest in Africa is waning in favour of interests in the Mediterranean, Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. I fully support the view that we should support what I call the 'near abroad', but the ACP states deserve much more of our attention."

Is it an unequal partnership? Is it not true that recipient ACP states are obliged to purchase products of donor EU nations? "The ACP-EU relationship is very special," Kinnock explained. "We [in the EU] try to address their [ACP] priorities and concerns. The trade aspect of the relationship is particularly crucial to ACP economic survival. We have a unique partnership. We learn a lot from our ACP partners. We exchange ideas rather than lead or impose our views on them." Kinnock cited the case of banana exports from the Caribbean islands to Europe. "We are opposed to huge amounts of bananas swamping European markets. We resolve to protect small producers in former British, French and Dutch colonies in the Caribbean and ensure that their bananas are not denied access into the EU. This is a good example of how we work together," she said.

Kinnock was uncertain about the future course of the ACP-EU relationship's development. "I do not know for how long we can rely on this special relationship continuing," she said, shrugging her shoulders in exasperation. "The EU is now saying that everything we do contravenes the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and the new World Trade Organisation rules. Then we have new members like Sweden who had no colonies in Africa and the Caribbean and who say how come poor countries like Bangladesh and Yemen are not ACP members."

Kinnock is dedicated to the development cause. "Naturally one of the challenges that I think we face in development is how to include the developing world in the global information society," she told *Al-Ahram Weekly*. "There are more telephones in Manhattan than there are in the whole of Africa. Information is power. Knowledge is power. So it is very important for us in the North to appreciate that just because countries are poor and have basic needs deficiencies, we should not assume that they don't have the right technology, skills and information. The reality is that the global information society is neither global, nor is the web worldwide," she added caustically.

"I've heard people say that because countries are too dirt tracks they should not be on information superhighways," Kinnock told the *Weekly*. In February 1995, the information and telecommunication ministers of the Group of Seven most important industrialised nations (G7) and European Commission members met in Brussels and pledged that developed and developing coun-

tries alike should be integrated into the global information society. Kinnock is committed to the principle of fostering partnerships between the public and the private sectors in developing information networks in Africa.

Europe has been keen on expanding information networks in Africa which have historically been closely bound to European information networks. On the whole, Kinnock approved of the recent "landmark agreement" signed by delegates at the Midrand meeting, which was part of the G7 Information Society and Development Conference. "[The Midrand meeting] highlighted how information technologies have tremendous potential to meet basic needs, develop human resources, improve the efficiency of government and the delivery of public services and promote participatory democracy in the South," she said. "There has been considerable communication between Europe and Africa, the developed and the less developed worlds on forging a united vision of how we need to develop a real global information society."

Lord Plumb, who did not attend the Midrand meeting, stressed the importance of Third World countries' capacity to attract the necessary private sector investment in developing information networks. "[The South] should create favourable climates to attract foreign investment in advanced information and communication infrastructure, as much as in other sectors of the economy," he told the *Weekly*.

"Persistent violations of human rights and fundamental civil liberties in Nigeria continue to be a source of grave concern for the EU," Lord Plumb warned. He is co-chairman of the Joint ACP-EU Assembly with John Kaputin of Papua New Guinea. In Windhoek, he stressed the need for the ACP countries to respect human rights. "We advised that the EU stop payments of all funds save humanitarian relief aid to Sudan and Nigeria," he said. A few months ago Plumb toured Sudan and met Sudanese President Omar Hassan Al-Bashir, several Sudanese cabinet ministers and National Islamic Front leader Hassan Al-Turabi, whom he described as a "a very tough operator". Lord Plumb visited refugee and displaced people's camps in the Nuba Mountains. He lamented the "terrible and deplorable conditions" there and in the war-torn African Great Lakes region of Rwanda, Burundi and Zaire. "The EU donates some \$500 a day to feed, clothe and provide facilities for the refugees. Overall annual EU aid to all developing countries amounts to some EC\$30 billion or \$60 billion. The comparable figure for the US is only \$10 billion. Annual EU aid to ACP states averages some \$14 billion," he said.

In the 1980s, the ACP states lost over \$100 billion in export income earnings because of the collapse of raw material and commodity prices. Meanwhile, the least

developed countries received less than \$50 billion in aid. "Humanitarian aid is no substitute for political action," Kinnock lamented. "Increasingly in Europe we are failing to recognise when to intervene. When we had the Cold War it was easy. There were the good guys and the bad guys. But now we cannot judge when to intervene or how." She warned that two important ACP member states, Sudan and Nigeria, were contravening internationally upheld standards of human rights.

"The most worrying problem about your region is Sudan," stressed Kinnock, who had just returned to Europe from a trip to Sudan. "It is certainly the case that Sudan is intent on destabilising the entire region. The ambitions of Al-Turabi know no bounds. It is appalling the way in which [the authorities in Khartoum] have been ignoring the political pressure from Egypt. The whole region is very worried about what goes on in Sudan and its ramifications on its neighbours. The ACP-EU Joint Assembly had very strong words for Sudan. The EU will not stand by while Sudan foments discord in Africa," she said.

"The Nigerians, again like the Sudanese, are not interested in international opinion. In both Sudan, Africa's largest country, and in Nigeria, the continent's most populous nation, political prisoners languish in prison in the most appalling conditions. Sudan and Nigeria should be treated as pariah states. They are both ignoring basic international standards. They should be forcibly put outside the international community," Kinnock said. "The EU has imposed an arms embargo against Nigeria, but it is not retrospective, so I bet they are changing the contracts like mad. I am in favour of an oil embargo."

Both Kinnock and Lord Plumb share similar views on the need to redefine the security strategies of ACP countries. "The concept of security must include food security and must not be limited to matters of defence," Lord Plumb warned. "My views are very clear. When a country becomes independent then it should not rely on mother or father to come to its rescue. It is wrong for ex-colonial powers to interfere in the internal affairs of their former colonies. I think independent countries have to be run by the indigenous people of the country." He did concede that European powers "cannot turn their backs on [African] countries in need."

Still, as I left the offices of those two MEPs in Strasbourg, the words of Papua New Guinea's Planning Minister and ACP Council President Moi Avei, came to mind. He told assembled EU and ACP delegates to the revised Lome IV Convention that took place in Mauritius last November that annual EU aid to ACP states amounted to EC\$5.5 per capita, which is the equivalent of "two pints of beer and a packet of crisps in an average London pub".

Moose in Africa

LAST week, United States Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs George Moose began a round of meetings on ethnic conflict in Burundi. Moose, heading a large delegation, is on a trip that has taken him to France, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda.

Moose tried to "encourage all parties to negotiate seriously towards national reconciliation" in Burundi. The US is planning to make inquiries with certain countries to see if they would be willing to participate in a possible mission to save Burundi from civil war. Burundi has been in the throes of ethnic violence for more than two years since an attempted coup in October 1993 in which Melchior Ndadaye, the first ethnic Hutu president, was killed.

Burundi has an ethnic make-up similar to that of Rwanda — a Tutsi minority and a Hutu majority — but has escaped the scale of ethnic violence that left more than 500,000 Tutsi and moderate Hutu dead in Rwanda in 1994 at the hands of Hutu extremists. Meanwhile, France suspended military cooperation with Burundi, citing "security problems" and the political impasse in the strife-torn country.

Shattuck

THE UNITED STATES' top human rights official, John Shattuck, visited Nigeria to apply pressure on Africa's most populous nation to curb human rights abuses. Shattuck plans to hold two days of talks with government officials and supporters of workers' rights and human rights, the US State Department said in a brief announcement.

The department said there had been a "steady deterioration" of human rights in Nigeria since 1993, when General Sani Abacha seized power. Under strong international pressure because of its deplorable human rights record, Nigeria promised to amend the law under which author and environmentalist Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight others were convicted and hanged last year.

The executions triggered an international outcry. The Commonwealth suspended Nigeria's membership while the European Union, the US, Canada and South Africa imposed sanctions against Nigeria, including an arms embargo. Nigeria promised to examine possible ecological damage in the oil-producing regions of the country. In a letter to United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Ghali, the Nigerians also agreed to review all cases of arrest without trial stemming from a 1984 decree.

Chad elections

LAST Sunday, Chadians voted in their first presidential elections since the central African nation won independence from France in 1960. They had a choice of 15 candidates. About 150 foreign observers were monitoring the elections.

President Idriss Deby, who seized power in December 1990 from his military rival, Hissene Habre, emerged as the victor. Deby, a member of the northern Zaghawa clan which straddles the border between Chad and Sudan, had attempted to delay the vote. Lol Mahamat Choua, a respected administrator who has held posts in several governments, was the biggest rival to Deby, the military architect of Chad's 1987 victory over Libyan forces.

France, Chad's main source of economic aid and military support, insisted on a constitutional referendum before the elections were held. Since 1986, France has maintained about 700 soldiers in Chad.

Compiled by
Heba Samir

Anti-apartheid archbishop retires

CANDLES light Cape Town's Anglican cathedral as Archbishop Desmond Tutu delivers his final sermon during an emotional farewell to his congregation on 2 June. Cape Town's Anglican archbishop steps down this week from the post he has held for the last 10 years. As Cape Town's first black African Anglican archbishop, Tutu distinguished himself as an anti-apartheid activist.

Archbishop Tutu, a close associate of South African President Nelson Mandela, retires during a week which witnessed the opposition National Party (NP) reassert its control over Cape Town by winning local and regional elections in the Western Cape Province. Meanwhile, Mandela's ruling African National Congress (ANC) is seeking a court order to allow it to probe into the poll outcome. Electoral officials conceded that there was a computer error in the vote tally in one of the sub-councils. When corrected, it gave the NP and the ANC an equal number of seats in the popular Tygerberg sub-council and reduced the NP's overall majority in the city — South Africa's second largest and the seat of the country's parliament — to only four councils.

The NP controls the provincial government in the Western Cape. KwaZulu-Natal, which is dominated by the Inkatha Freedom Party, is the only other South African province not run by the ANC. The seven ANC-governed provinces in South Africa held municipal elections last November, but the polls were postponed in the whole of KwaZulu-Natal and parts of the Western Cape because of political disputes.

Two contenders are in the running to succeed Tutu as Archbishop of Cape Town and the head of the Anglican Church in Southern Africa. The two contenders are Duncan Buchanan, the Bishop of Johannesburg, and Njongonkulu Winston Ndungane, Bishop of Kimberley and Kuruman in the Northern Cape Province.

Nobel peace prize laureate Tutu currently heads South Africa's recently established Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which is probing human rights abuses during the era of apartheid. (photo: Reuters)



Inkatha's madness must stop

The apartheid regime created the most destabilising political player in present-day South Africa — Gaisa Mangosuthu Buthelezi. As a black face in the apartheid alliance, he was given the position of chief minister of the homeland of KwaZulu in 1976 and was styled as ethnic leader of South Africa's 10 million Zulus. Today, the political Frankenstein uses the leverage he gained during the apartheid years to advance his political career. Buthelezi's political involvement has created mayhem in South Africa: fighting between supporters of Buthelezi's Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and President Nelson Mandela's African National Congress (ANC) for control of the eastern province of KwaZulu-Natal has left an estimated 12,000 to 15,000 people dead in the last decade.

Mangosuthu Buthelezi has fashioned a peculiar role for himself in South African politics. In the 1990s the conflict between the IFP and the ANC has been portrayed as tribal, mainly because of Buthelezi's political agenda which promotes Zulu separatism.

In 1966 the rural backwaters of South Africa were carved by the racist National Party into quasi-independent states known as homelands. KwaZulu was one of these. As Buthelezi was once an active member of the ANC's youth league, the ANC initially approved of Buthelezi's appointment to the post of chief minister. They envisaged Buthelezi as a kind of Trojan horse, an internal wing of the ANC in the guise of a homeland leader.

However, shortly after his instatement, Buthelezi started to pursue a separate line from that of the ANC. He refused to recruit people for the ANC's exiled military wing and opposed the ANC policy of imposing sanctions on apartheid South Africa. During the apartheid era, Buthelezi sided with the government, but maintained the role of an anti-apartheid campaigner by paying lip service to the

Despite the increased powers given to the provinces by South Africa's new constitution, violence is escalating in the run-up to local government elections in KwaZulu-Natal, warns **Sophia Christoforakis**

release of Mandela.

A strong alliance was formed between the IFP and the apartheid government, the details of which are only now being revealed in the trial of former apartheid-era Defence Minister Magnus Malan, which is currently taking place in Durban. The trial could implicate Buthelezi in a covert plan to assassinate his political opponents. Malan is being accused of masterminding the training of IFP members for death squads that carried out bloody attacks on ANC activists. In response to the accusations, Buthelezi said: "If someone wants to risk burning this country to ashes, let them arrest me." President Mandela told South Africans that "a sinister hidden hand of renegade police is still operating in KwaZulu-Natal in a deliberate attempt to foment strife and instability".

"Almost every family has lost a member or a relative in this undeclared war. This madness must stop," warned the president. In the green rolling heart of Zululand resides the person who carries the traditional responsibility to end this carnage: King Zwelithini Goodwill ka Bhhekuzulu. During the apartheid era the duties of the king were limited to ceremonial ones and his political responsibilities were assumed by his uncle — Mangosuthu Buthelezi.

Local government elections were held last November in all provinces of South Africa except KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape. The KwaZulu-Natal elections were rescheduled for 29 May. President Mandela then called for the ballot to be further postponed because he was concerned about reports of voter registration irregularities and the

existence of "no-go" areas in the region, where campaigning candidates cannot venture. The president's advice was heeded and the election date has been put back once again, this time to 29 June.

Buthelezi threatened to resign from his post as minister of home affairs and withdraw the IFP from the coalition government, if the elections were not going to take place on 29 May. He has now agreed to abide by the government's decision.

The real concern, though, is the escalating election violence. In the past three months, since campaigning for the polls started, three candidates have been assassinated — two from the ANC side and one from the IFP side — and at least 191 people have been killed in politically related violence. Furthermore, there are reports that in some townships residents are beginning to arm themselves in preparation for the poll. The Human Rights Advocacy Forum, a human rights monitor group, warned that the postponement would lead to an escalation of violence and give militants the time to mobilise and further undermine stability in the province.

Buthelezi has maintained a position in the post-apartheid dispensation by capitalising on the continuing violence to boost the importance of his self-styled position as Zulu leader. In the run-up to the KwaZulu-Natal elections, the IFP has been campaigning for the right to carry traditional Zulu weapons in public and for Buthelezi-supported traditional leaders to be left in charge of local government. The IFP's ultimate goal is an autonomous KwaZulu-Natal.

Philip Mtimku of the Department of Political Science at the University of South Africa highlighted what he termed the "weapons and chiefs" problem. According to Mtimku, these two issues "have given the IFP leverage over the ANC".

In March, the IFP organised a procession through the streets of central Johannesburg, marking the second anniversary of violence on the eve of the first democratic elections in 1994 when 53 people were killed. Two weeks before this year's march the South African government banned the carrying of traditional weapons in public. The IFP treated the ban as a direct challenge and supporters defiantly carried spears, shields, war clubs and fighting sticks during the march. Buthelezi told a news conference that Mandela's security forces "cannot stop Zulus from their God-given power to carry cultural accoutrements".

Police, fearing violence, refused to disarm the marchers and the march was described as a victory for Zulus. In this manner the election campaign was launched. It is through shows of force like this that the IFP has presented itself outside of Natal. The IFP draws its support mainly from the illiterate rural population of KwaZulu. The only method the IFP had of impacting on the urban areas was through violence. The country's central commercial region, the Witwatersrand, was particularly targeted and migrant Zulus were used to launch attacks. When the violence escalated in Witwatersrand in 1991, a survey revealed that the IFP was more unpopular among the region's urban population than the Nazi-styled Afrikaner Weerstand Beweging — an Afrikaner nationalist party.

The second issue of contention between the IFP and the ANC, which is being used as a draw card during the election campaign, is the question of provincial powers and the roles of traditional leaders in rural local government. In order to gain the support of KwaZulu-Natal's traditional leaders, Buthelezi has campaigned for a federal system of government.

"Traditional leaders have always wielded enormous power in KwaZulu-Natal," says Philip Mtimku. "Their autonomy is respected and they generally run their areas like their personal fiefdoms." The support the chiefs enjoy is not based on some deep allegiance to a Zulu identity, say Heribert Adam and Kogila Moodley in *The Negotiated Revolution*, a book analysing post-apartheid South Africa. Rather, the book argues, the IFP's poor and illiterate constituency depends on patronage handed out by traditional leaders and local power brokers for loyalty.

Any political figure who wants to gain the favour of the "chiefs" has to play into this system of patronage. Mandela revealed last year that he wanted the traditional chiefs to enjoy the same benefits as members of parliament — including seat salaries, official residences and transport, and secretaries.

The IFP tried to curry favour with the "chiefs" by taking its campaign for a federal South Africa to the national constitution-writing process. When the IFP demands were rejected, it withdrew from proceedings and drafted its own alternative constitution.

The new South African constitution was passed in parliament last month. Even though the IFP was absent, the constitution goes a long way towards meeting the IFP's federalist demands. Greater powers have been devolved to the provinces and a self-determination clause has been included that could potentially be utilised by the Zulu nationalists.

India's pendulum swings left

A non-Hindi-speaking prime minister? Communists unprecedentedly holding cabinet posts? These in themselves mark a notable political watershed for India, writes **Gamal Nkrumah**

"I will not describe myself as an economic reformer. I am just a peasant," India's newly sworn-in prime minister, H D Deve Gowda, said after the ceremony presided over by Indian President Shankar Dayal Sharma last week. But Gowda is no peasant; he is a civil engineer by training. So why did he choose to describe himself as a peasant? Because peasants matter. The strong showing of regional parties in the Indian elections can be laid at the door of millions of peasant voters. Peasants make up 62 per cent of the 620 million-strong Indian electorate. Small wonder Gowda retained the agriculture portfolio, along with the key home and atomic energy ones.

And why does Gowda, leader of the United Front ruling coalition, pretend not to be an economic reformer? Because the economic reform is seen as "anti-poor" by the Communist Party of India (CPI) and the other five communist coalition partners of Gowda's Janata Dal. One contribution to the centre-left victory was widespread discontent with the Congress Party's economic deregulation programme among the poor. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) — India's largest leftist party and the main rival of the CPI — refused to join the coalition because of its refusal to go along with the implementation, albeit in a watered-down form, of the economic reform programme.

Despite the close result, the elections have produced a historic outcome: the left is the dominant partner in central government for the first time in India's history. But Congress still holds key cards. Congress, at any rate, warned that it would withdraw its support for the new government if the economic reform programme it initiated in 1991 was reversed. It comes as no surprise then that many of the new Centre-Left coalition government's leftist cabinet members are former Congress Party members. Gowda himself started his political career as a Congress Party member in 1953.

The Centre-Left won a clear victory in the Indian elections. But the new government, whatever shade of pink or red, will have to press ahead with the economic liberalisation process. In other words, those who assume that economic reform policies can be replaced by doctrinaire socialism are trading in fantasies. The results have highlighted the many differences that divide India and it has underlined the key issues which unite a majority of the Indian political establishment — economic reform and secularism.

There was no mistaking that the results of the Indian elections amounted to a confirmation of the fact that the subcontinent's electorate is deeply divided. The results hold out the prospect of a hung parliament and an unstable administration for years to come. A coalition government with partners of diverse political persuasions could spell disaster for the country's economic reform programme.

"We have prepared a 15-point programme which comprises issues which require attention. Basic agreement on these issues cutting across political affiliations is essential," said Amit Mitra, the secretary-general of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), last week. Leaders of industry and commerce in the FICCI and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) seem determined that, whatever happens, the privatisation programme initiated by the Congress Party in 1991 must go ahead as planned by the architect of economic reform, India's former Finance Minister Manmohan Singh.

"There must be clear-cut norms for the infrastructure sector, there has to be a privatisation programme for public sector undertakings and there has to be control of deficit financing," warned Subodh Bhargava, former FICCI president last week.

Many of the CII's most influential entrepreneurs are also opposed to foreigners "coming in and taking over [our] companies," as one CII member succinctly put it to the *Times of India* last week. That partly explains why the Harvard-educated Palaniappan, Chidambaram was hand-picked for the much-coveted finance portfolio — a move much praised by business leaders. This was the week to test how far political dictators can be governed by economic policies in India.

The Bombay Stock Market index dropped 17.09 per cent points last Tuesday to 3,636.01 when it became clear that Gowda was forming the next government. Bombay's business community, the most influential and dynamic in the subcontinent, is banking on the Congress Party stopping the United Front from derailing the economic deregulation process. The community welcomed Gowda's choice of Chidambaram as new finance minister.

The United Front commands a combined strength of a mere 114 seats in the 545-member Lok Sabha, or Indian parliament. Gowda's government cannot claim a genuine electoral mandate and there is little prospect of it staying more than a few months — even weeks some would say — in power. President Sharma has given Gowda until 12 June to prove that he commands a majority in parliament.

Why was Gowda chosen as premier of the world's largest democracy? Why were regional bigwigs like Laloo Prasad Yadav, the chief minister of the impoverished state of Bihar, dropped in his favour? Unlike the forthcoming American and Russian presidential elections or even last week's Israeli prime ministerial elections, India's choice of premier has more to do with reaching compromises than with winning personalities.

India's first non-Hindi-speaking prime minister is also a southerner who champions a devolution of power from New Delhi — and the Hindi-speaking heartland of northern India — to the far-flung regions in the east, west and south of the subcontinent. Gowda was chief minister of the prosperous southern state of Karnataka. Bangalore, Karnataka's capital, is India's Silicon Valley.

Detractors say he heads a potpourri of 13 antagonistic parties. He retorts that his government will last the full five-year term in office. Top on his priority is to restore the federal structure of India which many of his supporters claim was eroded during the 1970s when Indira Gandhi was in power. "The days when the central government was run by one party are over. The regional parties are stronger now, and their voice has to be heard," he said.

Commentators on the out-of-the-ordinary events which India has experienced over the last couple of weeks have focused, both in India and abroad, on the difficulties the coalition government may face. They talk about Gowda's governance by default. The Centre-Left coalition may pay a terrible price for the ideological contradictions within its leadership, the prophets of doom proclaim. What is often overlooked is that the coalition does not fail, for its success will determine the shape of things to come. India is probably going to be governed by ideologically diverse coalitions for years to come.

One of the most worrying results of the elections has been the success of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). It remains an unpredictable force to be reckoned with. It is saddening to read about the ongoing troubles in Calcutta. Ethnic clashes between Hindus and Muslims in India's largest city have left over 20 dead and hundreds injured. The communal conflict in Calcutta hints at why the BJP scored highest at the polls. Let's face it, the BJP's victory in India's elections was historic despite the slender margin.

The BJP was rightly punished for its manipulation of religious chauvinism and communal hatred and denied a chance to rule. What united the Left and the Centre was their loathing of the BJP's divisive ideology of *Hindutva* — Hindu chauvinism. But the size of the BJP's victory suggests that it has far less leverage than was earlier assumed. The BJP won less than 25 per cent of the votes. Still, it is no secret that, by and large, India's business community favoured the BJP — that counted,



Heaven and hell rub shoulders in this corner of the Bosnian capital Sarajevo. The terrible memories of the past and hopes of a better future mingle together as Sarajevo's inhabitants rebuild their war shattered city. Through the window of a bullet-riddled building, a young Sarajevoan busies himself with burying the past and building a new future. Thousands of youngsters are taking part in the reconstruction of Sarajevo (photo: AFP)

Stronger mandate for Sinn Fein

Sinn Fein fared well in the Northern Irish elections that took place last week, making the party more adamant to take part in forthcoming all-party talks, whether the Irish Republican Army (IRA) restores a ceasefire it broke off earlier this year or not. Sinn Fein, the IRA's political wing, claims that the British government imposed the elections against the will of the party and that now the British government must bow to the will of the people and allow Sinn Fein, which proved to have a strong mandate from the Northern Irish people, to join the talks.

As the people of Ulster went to the polls, the Northern Irish parties were bickering over the decommissioning of weapons and the roles of Dublin and American mediator Senator George Mitchell in the talks, which are set to begin on 10 June. Last week's elections were meant to guarantee that all political parties in Northern Ireland would be fairly represented in the negotiations.

The elections were designed to choose democratically a 110-member forum. Ninety seats were selected from Northern Ireland's 18 constituencies — five from each constituency — and the remaining 20 were divided equally — two each — between Ulster's top 10 parties. Although the two biggest parties in Northern Ireland, the Ulster Unionist party (UUP), which favours union with Britain, and the Social

Sinn Fein's performance in last week's Northern Irish poll was impressive, but will the party be joining next week's peace talks? **Doaa El-Bey** reports from London

Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), a nationalist grouping, topped the list of parties as expected, they received less support than they did in the 1993 British general elections. The UUP and SDLP were down 5.1 and six percentage points respectively. Nevertheless, the former won 24.1 per cent and the latter 21.3 per cent of the votes. The hardline Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) took third position with 18.7 per cent of the poll — up one point on 1993 election results. Sinn Fein obtained 15.4 per cent of Ulster's ballot papers — an increase of over one per cent from 1993 — securing 17 seats in the forum.

Both London and Dublin, however, still insist that Sinn Fein cannot participate in all-party talks unless the IRA pledges to reinstate the 17-month ceasefire it ended in February with a bomb attack in London. In response, the IRA threatened to launch a new wave of violence and insisted that a new ceasefire could only be declared after the start of all-party talks. The SDLP leaders reiterated their call on the IRA to declare a new ceasefire to give Sinn Fein the historic opportunity to take part in all-party

talks. On the other hand, the DUP refuses to sit with Sinn Fein unless a permanent ceasefire is declared and weapons are decommissioned. The UUP, with a less hardline stand, has indicated that it will talk to Sinn Fein before decommissioning.

The Alliance Party attained fifth position in the elections with 6.5 per cent of the votes. The election system gave small parties the chance to be represented in the forum. Two fledgling unionist parties, the Progressive Unionist Party and the Ulster Democratic Party — the political wings of loyalist paramilitary groups, won two seats each. The United Kingdom Unionists won three seats and the Labour Party (in Northern Ireland) two seats. The newly established Women's Coalition, which put forward 70 women candidates to stand in the elections, secured two seats in the forum. The party is opposed to all forms of violence and believes that although decommissioning must ultimately be addressed it should not be allowed to stall the peace process. "Let's get people to the talks, then we can discuss issues like decommissioning," Monica

McWilliams, the leader of the Women's Coalition, told reporters last week.

Despite the trouble-free elections, thorny issues in the province remain unresolved. Decommissioning is still the most touchy of them all. The British and Irish governments have failed to agree on a formula to address the issue. Britain's Northern Ireland Secretary Sir Patrick Mayhew and Irish Foreign Minister Dick Spring have met twice in the last two weeks in London and Dublin to try to mend their differences but the meetings failed to produce an agreement. Britain wants to deal with decommissioning in the framework of all-party talks. The Irish government prefers to deal with it as a separate issue. The Unionist parties are backing the British government's stand and warning that, if not tackled early, disagreement on the decommissioning issue will ruin the talks. The nationalists believe that the British government's position is impeding the peace process.

Although the picture may seem bleak, most parties are optimistic that in the long run all-party talks will be held. "I am absolutely confident that even though it will be problematic, difficult, boring, tedious and convoluted, we will resolve all issues," Gerry Adams said in an interview with the *Financial Times* before the election results were declared.

"Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon 'em"

Shakespeare, Twelfth Night

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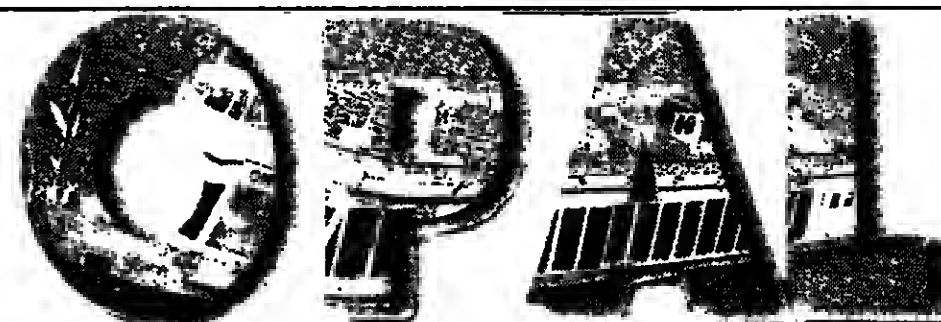
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Africa must be supported

On the occasion of its 40th anniversary celebrations, Minister of State for Economic Affairs **Youssef Boutros-Ghali**, paid homage to the Paris Club. *Al-Ahram Weekly* publishes the full text of his speech



The 40th anniversary of the Paris Club, is an occasion for very special rejoicing. First, because it is high time that we honoured the country that has helped create and nurture to maturity, a most famous and effective non-institution in the world: one that has taken its rightful place in the pantheon of organisations in charge of the stability and continued growth of the international financial system. It is time we recognised a staff of superb calibre, hard at work, yet seldom heard and almost never seen, principles uniformly accepted and applied, yet never written, and a record of consistent achievement in the service of the Third World.

A second reason for rejoicing is because I stand here in this hallowed conference room, among friends of the secretary of the Paris Club, creditor countries, and fellow debtors and countries and I am not asking for any assistance, re-scheduling, restructuring or any other such drastic financial surgery. I stand before you, representing Egypt, as I did five years ago almost to the day. It was then Thursday, 23 May. Only today, I come to honour this institution and the country hosting it — an institution that has been instrumental in providing crucial financial assistance to Egypt, financing a programme of lasting economic reforms. A programme, discussed here, financed here and very soon to be completed here.

I still recall five long, sleepless nights with the staff of the French treasury, devising the formulas, functions and tables that would come later to be standard in the restructuring of countless countries. I recall a time when I called Berey home, not just for the time I spent in it, but for the warmth of the staff and the welcome by France.

A deep and lasting friendship was forged with the then Paris Club president, my friend Jean-Claude Trichet, over a non-stop marathon session of negotiations that lasted 26 continuous hours. A last minute problem at 4.30 am cemented a complicity that, to this day, binds us across different schedules, problems and continents.

Egypt has used the exceptional financing of the Paris Club to build a successful economic reform programme — a programme that has instituted radical changes in our economy, that we know will carry us into the 21st century, out of the Third World and to the place that is rightfully Egypt's.

By 25 May 1991, the date of signing the agreed minutes of the Paris Club meeting, the government of Egypt had already started a process of liberalisation of the economy that continued throughout the next three years. Secure in the availability of the financing afforded us by the Paris Club, we could begin to solve Egypt's economic problems in a final and irreversible way. There is something about the adequacy of financing that goes beyond numbers, into the very confidence of an economic reform programme. The reforms begun that year have succeeded in a most fundamental way. Today, the Egyptian economy stands with an inflation rate of some six to seven per cent, a budget deficit of 1.5 per cent of the GDP, a growth rate in real income of four per cent, a stable currency and a new resolve to take the reform programme into the very fundamentals of the management of economic activity of Egypt.

This May 1996 has seen the start of the second phase of our reform programme, one that gives the private sector the lead in the economy through an ambitious privatisation programme and a programme of deregulation that will ensure that this lead will generate real growth. The financial stability of the Egyptian economy has allowed us to start a programme of trade liberalisation that will integrate Egypt into the world economy. There is a new vision in Egypt: one of growth, prosperity, and greater welfare for all. Most of all, there is a renewed confidence in ourselves, the Egyptian economy, and the future of Egypt.

The Paris Club celebrates today its 40th anniversary. Forty years of dealing with developed and not-so-developed country debt. Two oil shocks, and the aftermath of the second, have brought to the Paris Club over 70 countries for re-scheduling. Some more than once.

From July 1976 to March 1996, the Paris Club has re-scheduled over \$276 billion through over 249 rescheduling agreements. Over this long history, the terms of debt restructuring evolved with the circumstances of the Third World — from relatively short consolidation and restructuring periods, to longer restructuring periods and finally to net present value reduction in outstanding obligations.

Toronto, Houston, London, Naples are all part of a slow progression towards resolving the problem of indebtedness of the Third World. A last step, however still remains.

Of all the 65 countries with rescheduling agreements since 1980, 26 graduated from rescheduling and have resolved, permanently, their external indebtedness problem. Out of 15 lower-middle income countries, 10 have graduated.

For low income countries, out of 35 with rescheduling agreements, only five have graduated. This points to a lingering problem in the Third World, one that befalls you, the Paris Club, to take the lead in solving. In a recent paper to the boards of both Bretton-Woods institutions, 20 out of the 41 heavily indebted countries were identified as having unsustainable debt burdens. Knowing some of these countries, and belonging to the continent to which most of them belong, I will tell you that this number seriously underestimates the size of the problem at hand.

The problem, however, is greater than this, or even a bigger number. The overwhelming majority of the countries in this category of "terminal indebtedness" belong to the African continent. Their plight is the plight of an entire continent. Their welfare is the welfare of an entire continent. The poverty of Africa is in synergy with itself, spreading from country to country, strengthened at each turn, more endemic as time passes. We cannot, as a community of nations, accept to enter the 21st century with an entire continent condemned to remain on the margin.

The solution proposed by the two Bretton-Woods institutions follows all the principles that the Paris Club has preserved to date. It is built on true effort at reform, and will, we hope, be part of a broader movement for improving the living standards on the continent. It must be sponsored. It must be supported.

I can see no better candidate to promote this solution than France. At the heart of the current international and regional transatlantic initiatives, the initiatives towards Euro-Asian and Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, France has played a key role in helping build a new world order.

This process, embedded in French culture, has become synonymous with the concepts of Francophone alliance and solidarity. These concepts, announced by the President Chirac during his recent visit to Cairo, affirm the fundamental basic right of all peoples — without exception — to self-determination, security and independence.

This philosophy imposes on France, and gives us the right to expect from her, the obligation of guiding developing countries through the mechanism of the Paris Club, and the international financial community, on the path towards radical solutions to problems of severe indebtedness that plague them. We should all help in guaranteeing these peoples' right to security against the ravages of poverty and illiteracy towards a brighter and more prosperous future.

Edited by Ghada Ragab

Foreign investors boost market

The Egyptian stock market's recent revival attracted foreign and local investors, but traders and analysts differed on the reasons behind it. **Shereen Abdel-Razek** reports

After a months of decline, the stock market, for the last eight weeks, has shown signs of a recovery, with the value of market transactions reaching LE130 million over the last week. The market's turnover for the first five months of 1996 has reached LE2.5 billion, compared to around LE1.3 billion for 1995.

However, the surge in the volume of transactions is not the only sign of recovery. The increasing foreign interest also points to an upswing. The recent public offerings of majority stakes in the state-owned Medinat Nasr Housing and Construction Company (MNHCC) and the Financial and Industrial Group (FIC) were snapped up by foreign investors. In the case of FIC, 41 investment funds subscribed in the offering.

The capital market also received a much-needed push by the cabinet's recent decision to exempt investment fund profits from the 40 per cent income tax and the decision to abolish the 2 per cent capital gains tax on profits from the sale of shares.

Mohamed Abdel-Salam, head of Information Centre at the Capital Market Authority (CMA), pointed out that the market is gaining a degree of strength obviously reflected in the increase in the volume and number of transactions, as well as the number of companies trading shares.

Emphasising the positive impact that the new offerings are having on the market, he said they "stimulated the buying and selling activities because the introduction of shares of profit-making companies not only attracted new investors, but also encouraged the shareholders of other companies to sell their holdings and replace them with the new offerings."

The FIC was the market's shining star for the week ending 30 May, cornering 54 per cent of the market's total transactions. It traded LE235 million worth of shares.

Abdel-Salam rejected the possibility that the current revival will be followed by a downward trend similar to what happened in 1994 when a market revival was followed by declining share prices and over one-year of stagnation. "It was not a real recovery in 1994," he said. "What

happened was an increase in the value of shares and that is not a reliable factor in judging the strength of any market." He pointed out that there was another "unreal" recovery in October 1995 as trading action increased only because of the introduction of the computer system that accelerated the execution of buying and selling orders.

Hisham Tawfik, vice-president of the Egyptian Fund Management Group, pointed out that

the companies total shares.

"This shift rendered the shares more appealing for foreign investors," noted Tawfik. "Finally, after years of trying to promote Egypt abroad, foreigners were encouraged to invest in the local market." Tawfik denied that the cabinet's decision to abandon the proposed 40 per cent income tax on investment funds contributed significantly to the recovery. Investment funds were not subject to this tax as there was



Good business at the stock market

photo: Ayman Ibrahim

no article in the capital market law to impose it. He explained that this decision may have had a "psychological impact" on the investment funds' managers, who feared that funds may be subjected to it in the future.

However, he said, the lifting of the capital gains tax would be a welcome decision. "It was not a matter of fiscal burden, but it was an administrative headache. Shareholders have to

present the bill of purchase for each share before selling it," he stated.

Tawfik expected the market to witness an upsurge after being included in the World Bank's International Financial Corporation (IFC) index for emerging markets by the end of this year.

Each of the 26 countries listed in the index has a certain weight according to which investors distribute their investments. For example, if Egypt was given a weight of one per cent, all funds investing in emerging cent. all funds investing in emerging

markets would channel at least one

percent of their investments in the

Egyptian capital market.

Sherif Carrarah of the Egyptian Fi-

nanical Group attributed the market's

revival to the majority offerings. "The

stagnant market needed these kinds of

offerings to boost it. Investors are not

interested in 10 or 20 per cent of

ferings any more."

Another reason for the revival is the

diversification of sectors offering

shares in their companies. The cement

industry for example, he said, is now

less attractive since there are shares of

about three or four cement companies

being offered through the stock mar-

ket. Investors need new shares in new

sectors.

He added that the extension of the

market's working hours has contributed

to the increase in activity. But, he

said, earlier starting hours would be

more beneficial.

He also noted that the relatively low

prices of the shares in the Egyptian

stock exchange, compared to those in

other emerging markets, may have

also had a role in the revival. This

factor is very important to the Egyptian

small investor who is looking for a

dual benefit in the form of dividends

while the shares are in their possession

and a capital gains when they are sold.

The Egyptian market is still a "yield driven

market," he said.

In the next few weeks, the market will

receive another boost in the form of ongoing

share offerings in the Ameriya Cement

Company, the Nile Pharmaceuticals and Chemical

Industries Company and the General Company

for Ceramics and Porcelain.

After five years of reform, Mona Qassem reviews achievements in the stock market and the banking sector

Four years up-market

Progress is the name of the game for the Egyptian Stock Exchange after the passage of a new Capital Market Law four years ago

Over the past four years, the Egyptian stock market has served as a major tool for economic reform. As the market which absorbs the shares of privatised companies, the exchange, in this short period of time, has experienced a level of growth which took other emerging market ten years to realise. But while market performance has fluctuated periodically, sufficiently to drive away investors, it has, at times, achieved miraculous success.

The number of companies in the exchange has increased from 627 in 1991 to 746 by the end of 1995. Moreover, the number of listed companies that regularly trade shares on the exchange has jumped from 218 to 352 over the same period, as did the number of securities traded, increasing from 22.7 million to 72.2 million by the end of 1995. Similar growth is evidenced in the value of the transactions. In 1991, the value of trading activity was LE427.8 million. By 1994, this figure had skyrocketed to LE2,557 billion, only to increase again by the end of 1995 to LE3,849 billion.

The recent slide in the performance of the market is attributed to investors rushing to divest their holding as a preparatory step to buy into 59 companies which the government announced last February would be privatised.

Given that the economic reform programme has succeeded in adjusting fiscal and monetary policies, it is now suitable for the exchange to improve its performance. The stabilisation of foreign currency exchange rates has prohibited currency speculation and also served to realise capital gains. In addition, the decline in the inflation rate has been accompanied by a decrease in interest rates on bank deposits. These

factors together made the exchange a suitable place to realise high profits.

A comprehensive programme to regulate the exchange has introduced many modifications into the market, such as linking the Cairo and Alexandria stock exchanges via a high-tech system that affords all dealers equal trading opportunities. Additionally, some of the exchange's most pressing problems have been solved. For example, exchange regulators have overcome the problem relating to the length of time required to transfer the ownership of securities and profits lost during the decision-making process. One of the effective changes introduced by the Capital Market Law was the allowing of specialised brokerage companies which offer trading services to deal on the exchange floor. The number of brokerage companies in Egypt reached 101 companies by April 1996.

Another benefit is that the Egyptian market now has 15 portfolio investment management companies. These firms are completely different, both in terms of form and function, from brokerage houses, and each has a minimum capital of LE3 million. In other changes, a major company for clearing, settlements and central filing of securities was recently established. And, on the planning table is securing permission for establishing closed investment funds through which the private sector companies can work with the 10 existing open investment funds that were established by the private sector. These open funds have a capital of LE1.5 billion.

Given these changes and reforms, the Egyptian stock exchange has managed to bring together a large number of financial institutions. In all, its experience has, to date, been successful.

Bank-rolling reform

Five-years of economic reform have left banks in a strong position in both the capital market and with consumers

The beginning of the 1990s brought with it the introduction of an integrated economic reform programme made up of several monetary and fiscal amendments such as the liberalisation of interest rates in January 1991. This programme greatly affected, and was eventually affected by, the changes in the banking sector. Other reforms pertained to the percentage of reserves and the volume of liquidity banks have to keep. These changes aimed at increasing savings, rationalising credit facilities and organising the foreign currency market.

Liberalising exchange rates in February 1991 was also one of the major economic reform steps taken, and was followed by the imposing of credit ceiling for funds extended to both the public and private sectors. However, these ceilings were later lifted. In other reform measures, the role of the central bank was strengthened along with a corresponding increase in the power wielded by its control and supervisory authorities. This step was accomplished through Law 37 of 1993.

Overall, these changes succeeded in raising the volume of savings to LE156.6 billion by the end of fiscal 1994-95, compared to LE93.9 billion in fiscal 1991-92. During this five-year period, banks extended loans to different economic sectors, with the total volume of the loans and discounts reaching LE106.61 billion

in fiscal 1994-95 compared to LE60.83 billion in fiscal 1991-92. The industrial sector, including both the private and public sector, is considered to be the biggest debtor to banks, owing approximately 33 per cent of all outstanding loans.

As a result of these reforms and their products, and in light of the Capital Market Law, banks are no longer just mediators between depositors and borrowers. Their role has become both tangible and effective in that they serve to inform investors of the benefit and means of investing in the capital market and issue simple news letters explaining investors' rights as shareholders.

Banks also took large steps in creating and cementing a mechanism through which information would flow between the banking sector and the capital market. Consequently, capitalising on this 'new medium', several information-related companies emerged on the Egyptian market.

Also within the framework of their efforts to upgrade the performance of the capital market, banks are now contributing to the establishment of companies specialising in capital market-related activities such as investment funds. Moreover, the capital market has given banks the right to establish and operate mutual funds. Banks have also funded a number of mergers and acquisitions during this five-year period.

Bank share purchase

IN AN unprecedented move, a group of businessmen bought the majority of shares in the Alexandria-Kuwait International Bank (AKIB), a joint-venture bank. The purchase came in response to an offer by the Bank of Alexandria to sell its 70 per cent stake in the AKIB. The total value of the purchase amounted to LE70 million. Only 20 per cent has been paid, with the outstanding balance to be settled by the end of the month.

The buyers are Mohamed Farid Khamis, chairman of the Egyptian Federation of Industries, Mohamed Guneidi, chairman of the GMC Group, Mohamed Abul-Enin, chairman of Ismailia Ready-Made Garments Company and the employees funds of the National Bank of Egypt and the Suez Canal Bank.

Safe water in Cairo

CAIRO'S much maligned tap water was given a clean bill of health by a recent study conducted by Cairo University's Centre for Environmental Hazard Mitigation (CEHM), reports Zelnah Abut-Gheit. The study found that the water samples analysed carried an acceptable concentration of toxic metals. The toxic concentration level in the water was below US primary drinking water standards which, for lead, are 0.05 milligrams per litre. The only exception was in Al-Garnaa Square where the concentration was higher. Lead levels in water are a primary concern in Cairo.

Water samples were analysed by a certified environmental laboratory in the US for the concentration of 12 elements listed in the US's Environmental Protection Agency's list of priority pollutants. Forty-five water samples were collected randomly at water distribution stations, residential and public water taps and from water tanks located throughout the Greater Cairo area.

The study added, however, that the quality of Cairo's tap water, after leaving the water stations, may be affected by the metal and the condition of the water pipes, whether the water is stored in a tank and how long it sits in the pipes before being used. It is recommended that the water be run for a while before it is drunk or used for cooking.

The study was directed by Mohamed Sultan and Neil Sturchio, the US principal investigators for the CEHM, and was conducted in response to a need for accurate data on the quality of Cairo's tap water. "The previous studies of the quality of Cairo drinking water gave widely varying results and we wanted to resolve this issue," said Sultan.

The CEHM was established in early 1995 with the aim of tackling the serious environmental problems currently facing Egypt. It is funded by an LE10 million grant from the US Department of Agriculture, with the funds being administered by the Egyptian Ministry of International Cooperation.

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Al-Ahram: A Diwan of contemporary life

Throughout the Mameluke era, the turbaned scholars of Al-Azhar symbolised the Egyptian intellectual. Beginning with the reign of Mohamed Ali, the Egyptian military academy, with its schools of engineering, medicine and languages became the seat of scholarship, which, until the end of the 19th century, was embodied in such intellectual notables as Orabi, Barudi and Ali Mubarak.

Khedive Ismail, Mohammed Ali's grandson, brought about the transition from a militaristic to a civil society. He moved the seat of government from the Citadel, with all its trappings of an impenetrable medieval castle, to the newly-built Versailles-like palace in Aldin. The creation of a Council of Ministers and a legislative parliament introduced the notion of civilian government. He also introduced higher institutes of learning, in particular, inaugurated the Khedival Law School which served as the academic seat of the new symbols of Egyptian public life—the turbaned class of civil servants. Included in this class were such notables as Mustafa Kamel, Ahmed Lutfi El-Sayid, Mohamed Farid and Qassem Amin.

First launched in 1868 as the School of Administration and Languages, Egypt's first school of law was Ismail's way to counter the judicial independence that foreigners had been granted under the capitulations system. Officially stated, the purpose was "to prepare and provide Egyptian judiciary cadres with the required integrity and expertise, and to furnish the legislation necessary to meet the new requirements of Egyptians and expatriates." But while the academy only officially changed its name to the School of Law in 1886, from the beginning, the courses focused on law and jurisprudence. The languages faculty was limited to eight students a year.

The school, which originally opened in Abbassya, was soon moved to a wing in the Gammariz Palace. While some of its graduates were sent on educational missions abroad in order to complete their studies in the Aix-en-Provence, the majority were immediately posted in commercial, interior and foreign affairs. The establishment of the Ministry of Justice in the beginning of the 1880s, however, meant that most of the law school's graduates were absorbed into its ranks instead.

The newly-created school acquired a heavy French accent. In addition to the fact that French law was universally influential, there was a special regard for French language and culture in Egypt. Undoubtedly because of this influence, Ismail appointed as the school's first dean, Victor Vidal, who remained in that post until 1889.

Even with the British occupation in 1882, Vidal made no changes in his management of the school. However, once he left his post, a two-year hiatus ensued during which the school suffered a rapid decline, the symptoms of which

are recorded in *Al-Ahram*.

The first of these symptoms manifested itself in the confusion caused by the problem of selecting a new dean. Initially, rumours had it that an Egyptian, Hussein Bey Wassef, would be appointed. Announcing the news with considerable enthusiasm, *Al-Ahram* wrote, "There is no denying the fact that Hussein Bey Wassef is eminently qualified for the post. At the same time, Hussein Bey is the first to agree with us on the need to reform the principles of instruction in that school. We therefore believe that one of his most solemn tasks will be to introduce a new and comprehensive curriculum. Otherwise, it will not be long before voices cry out that the school is a failure."

Ultimately, however, the choice for dean fell upon a law professor from the University of Grenoble. On 11 December, 1891, *Al-Ahram* welcomed the arrival of Charles Testeau. The customary warmth *Al-Ahram* reserved for the French was tinged by relief that Vidal's replacement was not an Englishman, temporarily allaying apprehensions that would soon prove to be justified.

The disruption caused by the delay in the appointment of a new dean, coupled with other administrative questions, caused a considerable decline in the students' performance levels. On 26 June, 1891, *Al-Ahram* wrote, "Following the final examinations of the students of the Khedival School of Law, the examinations board submitted a report to the prosecutor-general of the national courts saying that the curriculum is extremely poor and that the school is in urgent need of numerous reforms and improvements."

It was under these troubling circumstances that Testeau assumed his new post. However, within a few years, the new dean would turn the school around and restore its reputation for academic excellence, with many of its graduates becoming the most prominent leaders of the nationalist movement.

At first, however, Testeau faced a formidable challenge. Even before he arrived, the issue of reform was of pressing public concern. In a lengthy article that appeared in *Al-Ahram*'s 11 November 1891 edition, the writer asserted that four parties would have to collaborate closely in order to rescue the school from its "decay". These were the Ministry of Education, which would be responsible for selecting suitable candidates who have completed their primary and preparatory school training; the dean himself, who was directly responsible for running the school and who would shoulder the brunt of the responsibility for reforming its administration; the Ministry of Justice as the major employer of the school's graduates; and, finally, the students themselves, "upon whom rests the burden of striving for excellence in both their law studies and in their judicial occupations."

In the interim, people directly involved with the running of the school began to lay the groundwork. According to *Al-Ahram*,

1 3 2 An Egyptian law school with a French accent founded by Khedive Ismail sought to counter the judicial independence granted foreigners under the capitulations system. The British, however, were eager to shift the scales of justice in their favour. **Dr Yunan Labib Rizk** chronicles the tale through the pages of *Al-Ahram*



the professors met "to examine the alterations that should be introduced into the curriculum." In addition, the advisor to the Ministry of Justice and the Deputy Minister of Education visited the school "in order to observe the manner of instruction, to inspect the lesson plans and to examine some students on legal questions after which the visitors made some useful suggestions." As a result of these efforts, when Testeau arrived, people were ready to offer him their recommendations.

Testeau hit the ground running, and reform was quick to come. The most tangible proof of improvement could be seen on the days of the final examinations. *Al-Ahram*'s correspondent was present on the occasion of the final examinations of 1895. That day marked an important victory, he wrote, "particularly as all the third-year students passed... We congratulate them, along with their professors, their tireless dean, Testeau, and the honourable Deputy Director, Omar Bey Lutfi."

A more important testimony was that of Sir Scott, the British advisor to the Ministry of Justice. After attending the 1896 end-of-year examinations, Scott submitted an exhaustive report to the minister of education on the progress of the school. In light of the issues it addresses, the report is an extremely important historical document.

Scott began his report by recalling his visit to the school 20 years before. At the time, he said, the former dean, Vidal, was

concerned with the task instilling in his students the talent of comprehension over their native talent for memorisation. In this endeavour, Vidal had achieved considerable success.

Scott then commented on the progress the school had achieved during the few years prior to his visit. In this regard, he made several observations. He noted that the number of graduates selected to join the judiciary had increased to 20. He also noted that the school was a breeding ground for outstanding upper-class students, many of whom went on to become future ministers of state.

Scott also praised the system of instruction. He wrote, "The school has come to prepare for the Egyptian courts highly qualified judges. There is no longer any need today to bring judges from abroad, except in those few unusual cases that require judges of international repute." In response to this admission, *Al-Ahram* commented, "It is to be hoped that Scott keeps these words in mind, unlike numerous occasions [in the past] when, out of political exigencies not in the interests of the country, he acted contrary to his reports."

On the basis of Scott's report the Ministry of Justice issued a resolution in June 1897 stating that "the certificate in law will be conferred upon all graduates of the School of Law who have succeeded in their final examinations." The degree continued to be conferred on the school's

graduates for several decades thereafter.

Yet, while these important developments were taking place within the school, events outside its walls would have tremendous bearing on its evolution. For example, on 17 September 1893, a new law was promulgated that for the first time stipulated that in order to obtain a license to practice law, applicants must have obtained a law certificate either from Egypt or abroad. The new law would not only shore up the links between the law school and the government, it would also threaten practicing lawyers who did not have an educational certificate. As *Al-Ahram* observed, "It is most clear that those today engaged in the legal profession will suffer unduly if they are barred from the right to practice. They will be faced with only two alternatives: either to travel abroad in order to pass the examination that will provide them the necessary certification, or to pass the examination in this country. For the latter to be feasible, we must create a permanent examinations board for them since their occupations and the regulations of the school do not permit them to enroll in the Law School." This is probably one of the earliest proposals for a system of correspondence courses to help professionals with their continuing education.

Proponents of this view also sought to expand the base of students accepted into the school in order to include government employees wishing to improve their knowledge of law. They argued that the heavily staffed government departments "need well-educated employees, particularly in the discipline of law, because such knowledge is not only necessary for those who enlist in the service of the public prosecution or the courts, but for all who have important administrative responsibilities."

It was not long before the Khedival School of Law responded to these suggestions. At the end of 1893, it opened a section for evening courses, an occasion which the newly-admitted students celebrated with zeal.

Unfortunately, the days of the night school were numbered. In 1896 Scott submitted a report saying, "the students who are engaged in full-time study acquire a vaster and more thorough knowledge than their colleagues who only attend evening courses." This statement was the death warrant for the department and, three years later, the sentence was carried out. We learn of it in another report by Scott in which he expresses his "satisfaction" over the fact that the school had "abolished its department for evening courses which were of little benefit." The night law school only lasted six years.

For aspiring professionals, however, this was not the end. In the interim, the French Law School, a national private school, had opened its doors largely due to Scott's critical report. On 23 October of that year *Al-Ahram* gave prominent space to an advertisement placed by French Law School, announcing that its "doors are now open to applicants for admissions and registra-

tion", and that "courses will begin on 1 November."

Al-Ahram's enthusiasm for the newly-opened law school, among other things, was certainly grounded in the pro-French bias of its owners, as well as their antipathy toward the occupation which they feared would move to gain control over the Khedival Law School.

Al-Ahram was not alone in its encouragement of the new school. It had the support of highly placed members of the French community in Egypt, including Corcodan, the French commissioner who was a frequent and honoured guest at the school and who presided at the distribution of awards to outstanding students. Equally, if not more important, as noted in *Al-Ahram*, it had the support of educational authorities in France. The newspaper ran an item in June 1897 which announced, "The French Law School in Cairo has concluded its academic year with three days of examinations, ending today. This is the preparatory examination on the basis of which outstanding students are selected to travel to Paris to complete their studies."

At the same time, *Al-Ahram*'s apprehensions of British designs on the Khedival Law School were beginning to prove true. It began with the rumour that the school planned to open an English department in January 1899. In spite of the fact that authorities tried to placate the opposition by announcing that English would be optional, *Al-Ahram*'s criticism was hitting: "It is well known that the British have no law other than that based on precedent and some terminology—what a meaty subject!" By the end of 1898, rumour turned to reality. The Khedival Law School would have two departments, described caustically in *Al-Ahram* as "the original department for the science of law and a newly-introduced anomaly, the department of politics."

Al-Ahram clearly was not in favour of the new department and lashed out at the school's new policy. A lengthy article featured by the paper expressed dismay that the glowing image of the Khedival Law School, which had long been praised by the British occupiers, would now be tarnished. It presents a gruesome vision of the school's future: "Prancing in its corridors we see red-faced, snub-nosed, fat-necked, white-skinned teachers who have been brought over from the banks of the Thames to instruct our students in English on French law. Is this reality or am I dreaming because it is 2.00 am?"

Unfortunately, despite the strong ties to French culture, this prospect proved to be a nightmarish reality, with the only consolation being that British attempts to supplant the French influence in the school would not last long into the next century.

The author is a professor of history and head of Al-Ahram History Studies Centre.



Measures taken for expatriates' return

PREPARATIONS are currently underway at Cairo's ports to process the more than one million Egyptian expatriates who will return to Egypt to spend their annual vacation. Instructions were given to facilitate inspection measures, as well as placing an extra number of customs employees on duty in the baggage section.

Abdel-Raouf, manager of the baggage section, stated that because 200 travellers are received daily, the terminal will have to be expanded.

Eid Mohamed, a customs manager, confirmed that the procedures are performed through three stages which will take no more than one hour.

MONEY & BUSINESS



Boosting Libyan investments in Egypt

MOHAMED AL-Huwaig, chairman of the Arab Foreign Libyan Investments Co, stated that Libyan President Muammar Qaddafi issued directives to focus LE1.5bn in Libyan Investments towards all countries, especially Egypt.

El-Huwaig added that this is the first step to double investments, an aim which requires the cooperation between businessmen in both countries. It is worth noting that Egyptian-Libyan cooperation has borne fruit in many projects in the medical and petrochemical field in the past. The Eastern Co. for Pharmaceuticals is the latest of these projects.

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The Continental School of Cairo

THE PURPOSE of education for all children is the same; the goals are the same; first, to enlarge a child's knowledge, experience and imaginative understanding, and thus his awareness of moral values; and second, to enable a child to enter the world after his formal education is over as an active participant in society and a responsible contributor to it, capable of achieving as much independence as possible. But the help that individual children need in order to progress will be different; for some the knowledge will not be spontaneously ac-

quired and has to be elaborately taught.

Children who are slow learners or with other learning difficulties are hard pressed to find schools in Cairo which can meet their Special Educational Needs. The Continental School of Cairo is a British special education school for children who find it difficult to keep pace within the normal school environment. The school is specifically set up to meet the needs of slow learners and children with learning difficulties. The CSC is a co-educational day school. It follows the British National Curriculum

and the medium of instruction is English. The school is also a full member of the National Association of Special Educational Needs of the United Kingdom and is authorised by the University of Cambridge Local Examination Syndicate (UCLES) to prepare students with special educational needs for the IGCSE examinations at core level. The CSC today is a truly international community with children representing 15 different nationalities and it is open to boys and girls of all nationalities and beliefs from the age of 3 years upward. The Continental

School of Cairo firmly believes that the full potential of children with learning difficulties can not be realised in a regular school that follows a rigid curriculum under a typical classroom situation, so pupils at the CSC are treated as individuals and work in small groups.

The CSC, wherever possible, will attempt to meet the demand of parents whose children require special education in the following categories:

- Mild learning difficulties
- Specific learning difficulties
- Mild autism

- Dyslexia
- Hearing deficiency
- Speech deficiency
- Slow learners
- Attention deficit

All teachers in the CSC are qualified and experienced British special education teachers and every teacher is assisted by a full time teacher aide. A full time school psychologist, a speech therapist and a visiting doctor complement the team of education specialists in the school. Registration for the new school year 1996/1997 is currently in progress at the school premises in Almaza Street in Heliopolis.

Businessmen's role in improving education

HUSSEIN Kamel Bahaeddin, minister of education, discussed with a number of businessmen their key role in supporting education in many schools such as El-Orman, Heliopolis Secondary School for Girls, El-Tawfiqiya Secondary School, Zamelek Preparatory School for Girls and Tabari El-Hegaz School.

Patronising these schools are a number of businessmen such as Ibrahim Kamel, Mohamed

Farid Khamis, Hani Rizk and Louis Beshara.

These schools were chosen as a beginning of a national project in all governorates of Egypt. One of the objectives of this businessman's support is to introduce the latest technology to schools and institutes such as the 10th of Ramadan City Technical School. A fund will be launched for businessmen's contributions to finance these activities.

First real estate exhibition

THE INVESTMENT Authority approved holding a real estate exhibition, the first of its kind in Egypt.

The event is being organised by El-Safaa Co, considered one of the largest companies in the field of organising fairs and conferences in the Middle East and the Arab world.

El-Safaa previously organised the "Arabs and the World" fair in Casablanca, attended by thousands of Egyptian and Arab investors.

The company's manager noted that the ex-

hibition will promote real estate investments in the Arab world. It intends to present an overall picture of the real estate market in the Arab world, shedding light on its unique characteristics.

The exhibition will take place at the Exhibition Grounds, Nasr City. Participants include Egyptian and Arab banks, insurance companies and investment companies from Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and other countries.

The exhibition will be the meeting place of businessmen and ministers, and will provide them an opportunity to sign trade deals.

Getting over unemployment

THE NATIONAL Bank of Egypt, in cooperation with the Ministry of Trade and Food Supply and the Social Fund, is embarking on a project to employ fresh graduates in marketing services. Graduates are offered loans that include the price of a car and the goods they sell according to the activities. They are also provided with a location from where they can perform their activities. The project is aimed at providing jobs for unemployed graduates. One of the objectives of the project is to increase demand for consumer and food products, especially in the poor suburbs and new cities.

PepsiCo increases investments

PEPSICO will launch a new investment project with a cost of \$100mn in Mozambique, Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya.

The project includes launching factories for packaging Pepsi Cola as well as a services centre. The project will play a key role in promoting Pepsi Cola sales.

Al-Ahram Weekly

Netanyahu must choose

A stalled peace process has now become one of paradoxes. As prime minister-elect, Netanyahu affirmed his commitment to peace and accepted the pledges made by Israel in the Oslo Accords in 1993. However, he continues to rule out the notion of a Palestinian state and any negotiations over the status of Jerusalem; he rejects the possibility of a land-for-peace deal with Syria and asserts Israel's right to hunt out its enemies wherever they might be. Finally, he expressed a desire not to meet Arafat at all. Nowhere in these statements is there any mention of concessions.

Nor would any be expected given the fact that right-wing religious parties won 23 seats in the Knesset and new parties, such as Yisrael B'Aliya, 11. It was these groups, along with some disenfranchised swing voters, that gave Netanyahu the necessary leverage to win Peres' seat. But it is also from this reality that the paradox stems. In a country where the government's political rift reflects the society's dichotomous, secular/religious nature, Netanyahu must choose between moderation and extremism, his ideological convictions and the political reality that has come to be in the region.

These choices will not be easy to make given that neither Netanyahu nor his aides seem to have any concrete idea of what his agenda may be. Or, for that matter, how to implement it, once it is formulated. While it is reasonable to expect that he will continue on the same track as his predecessor, perhaps even relaxing Israel's economic stranglehold on the West Bank and Gaza by opening the borders, it will take much more than this to bring peace to its comprehensive fruition. For peace to progress and develop, he must exhibit a measure of commitment as hard-line as the political ideology which allowed him to come to power.

The process has reached a stage that calls for conviction, compromise and conciliation, not the trial and error brand of diplomacy that comes with inexperience. Inflexibility and fiery ideological rhetoric have no more place in political pragmatism than does tentative decision-making.

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The second generation

Rabin is dead, Peres has lost. Netanyahu's victory, writes **Gamil Matar**, marks a turning point in the peace process, and suggests that Israelis now want total Arab surrender

"An earthquake" is how one Arab commentator described the results of the recent elections in Israel. His will not be the last exaggeration used to describe unanticipated developments in the Middle East, nor is the commentator alone in his dismay. Officials and observers in the West had rosy visions of the results. It is unfair, therefore, to say that the only reason the Arabs are shocked is their ignorance of democratic practices and the rotation of political office.

Many have expressed anxiety over Netanyahu's victory and the redistribution of the Knesset seats. Motives, however, vary. Washington's fears do not necessarily coincide with those of Cairo, or are Cairo's anxieties those of Damascus. Arafat's sense of disappointment is entirely different from the disappointment felt throughout the Arab world. As one observes the reverberations of the electoral results, one sometimes imagines that Arab politicians who have been praising the Labour Party leadership for its courage and commitment to the peace agreements will feel somewhat embarrassed using such complimentary epithets with regard to their new negotiating partners. It would be tantamount to exonerating Israel of terrorism and expansionism and confirming Israel's accusation that the Arabs alone are the aggressors, fostering terrorism and renegeing on their agreements.

In a sense, one can understand the apprehensions. The elections are indicative of the swelling influence of Right-wing forces throughout the Middle East. On the surface, the rising Right should not be so fraught with danger. The Right has been in power in the Arab world for many years, even if political slogans and official documents such as constitutions and laws suggest otherwise. More frightening, however, are some of the Right's derivatives in Israel, for example, Netanyahu himself does not pose a great threat to the architects of the peace process.

Israel's neighbours or the US. Yet his victory carries in its wake innumerable unknown entities: the Israeli army, Ariel Sharon, the Likud's Yigal Amir, and those hundreds of young demonstrators who rallied in front of Likud offices a few days ago to demand the expulsion of Rabin's widow from Israel.

In other words, the trends that govern politics in Israel and the Arab world are not moving against the predictions of political analysts. On both sides the economic and political Right is gaining a broader sphere of influence in the decision-making process. Right-wing extremism, one of the derivatives of the political Right, is steadily gaining ground in its ability to intervene directly or indirectly in the political process. In all the countries of the Middle East without exception, religious parties are seeking a greater say in national affairs. In some countries they resort to armed terrorism; in others they use various means of intimidation to inhibit freedom of thought and expression. Elsewhere, they extend their power through more legitimate means, using appointments to judiciary positions or the ballot box and political alliances to acquire seats in the legislative councils, as in Israel and Turkey, and as was almost the case in Jordan.

Therefore, the coming phase of the peace negotiations, whether between the parties who have already signed agreements or with those countries — and they are many — that have yet to sign, will, in effect, take place among representatives of the political right in all these countries. This phase will be mediated by the US, which is also drifting inexorably toward the right. Indeed, the current Arab-Israeli peace process was initiated by a conservative Egyptian and a conservative Israeli. Moreover, extremist elements in both countries had almost succeeded in thwarting the peace process entirely on two occasions: first with the assassination of Se-

dat, then with that of Rabin. The extremist Right in Israel, however, has been more successful. It has managed to alter the country's political party structure and may well be able to effect fundamental changes in the course the peace process takes.

I do not believe, however, that the peace process is really in danger. The process itself has generated its own momentum, creating a network of politicians, academicians, media functionaries, organisations, companies and banks with strong vested interests in peace. It has also entrenched certain principles among the international community that no one can risk abandoning, even if the parties directly involved attempt to do so. The peace process will continue, whether Netanyahu is in power or whether he is supplanted by the leader of any religious extremist group in Israel.

But the next stage of the peace process promises numerous complications. The Arab opposition knows, and we know that they know, and Israel knows that we all know, no one, so far, has come up with a single acceptable definition for peace between the Arabs and Israel. Everyone knows that this definition will be patched together by the negotiators, who will haggle, every step of the way, over every point in every article they agree upon. Nor will we know the precise nature of peace until we are able to read the entire collection of treaties Israel signed with the Arabs, when we draw up the final political boundaries — not just between Israel and Palestine, but for Jerusalem and the Jewish settler areas in Palestine — and when we can examine the economic, political and cultural relations as well as the changes in the educational curricula and broadcasting programmes that will emanate from the treaties. Only then will we, and future generations, comprehend what kind of peace this generation has signed with our enemy, Israel. This is the very reason why the Israeli

people decided to oust the government of Peres. More than three-quarters of the voters cast their ballot for "a better peace" with the Arabs — meaning, of course, a better peace for Israel. The election results tell us that more than half of the Israeli electorate wants a government that will take a harder line in the negotiations in order to obtain maximum security for Israel and minimum security for the Arabs. In addition, about half the voters who voted for Peres cast their votes for a stronger anti-Peres opposition in the Knesset.

What all this tells us is that Israel is divided. The elections have reiterated the message conveyed by Rabin's assassin and by the authors of major newspaper editorials in the US, most of whom are Zionists. Indeed, the author of one article written shortly before the elections is no less violent and bloodthirsty than the man who killed Rabin. William Safire, the author, openly invites the Israelis to wreak vengeance on the Arabs, particularly the Syrians and Palestinians, to rescind the Oslo Agreement and to build "a new peace" on the terms and conditions stipulated by the Israeli Right.

The division among Israelis and Zionists internationally does not worry me. Nor am I perturbed by the current divisions in the Arab world over the peace process. What does cause me anxiety is that Israeli negotiators will be able to take advantage of these divisions in order to obtain their "better peace", more advantages in the region for Turkey, to create greater tensions within the Arab and Islamic world and to secure greater influence for the US. It also worries me greatly that some Arab countries will be harsher in their repression of opposition in Arab public opinion.

The Israeli elections clearly illustrate several trends. Half the Israelis want Netanyahu because they consider him to be more capable of exploiting the Arabs' weakness. Peres, and Rabin before

him, were the first in Israel to fall victim to the fact that they were embraced by the Arabs. In fact, the Sharm El-Sheikh summit at which Peres was received with such warmth was perhaps the proverbial straw. At the same time, it is apparent that three-fourths of the people in Israel have no confidence in Peres, the Oslo Accords, the American administration and the intentions of the Arab governments. In other words, supporters of Israel will no longer accept anything but measures that ensure total Arab surrender as the exclusive form of a permanent and comprehensive peace settlement in the Middle East. Moreover, this is an election year in the US, which means that the American administration has no recourse but to beg Netanyahu to resume, as quickly as possible, the show of making peace. They will try to convince him to implement some of the commitments made by Peres with regard to Hebron and Gaza, redeploying Israeli forces and lifting the blockade on the Palestinian people, while declaring more sensitive issues until after the US elections. Netanyahu, for his part, will take advantage of the election climate to pressure the US for larger amounts of financial and military aid and to exert greater pressure, if not a modicum of coercion, against Syria, Lebanon and Iran.

The assassination of Rabin and the fall of Peres mark the end of the era of the first generation of Israeli politicians. Netanyahu's victory signals the second generation's rise to power. There are profound differences between the two generations with respect to their perceptions of the world, Jews in Israel versus Jews in the diaspora, the Palestinians and the Arabs and the role of Judaism as a religion and a national identity. These differences in outlook will affect the peace process and the future of the Arab-Israeli conflict in general.

The writer is the director of the Arab Centre for Development and Futuristic Research.

Redefining 'security' and 'peace'

Netanyahu's victory at the polls places the Middle East peace process in an entirely new rationale. **Mohamed Sid-Ahmed** comments

Two words occupied centre-stage in the Israeli election campaign: "security" and "peace", which were presented as diametrically opposed. As it turned out, the Israeli electorate was equally divided over which should be given precedence over the other. Those who cast their ballot for the Likud were effectively voting to place security before peace, while those who voted Labour were prepared to assume a security risk for the sake of peace.

The special nature of the Arab-Israeli conflict has imbued the two words with connotations not usually associated with them. Throughout history, conflicts between nations have been over issues not touching on their right to exist, because they have always existed in specific geographical locations. This has not been the case with Israel which, according to the Bible and archaeological evidence, existed two thousand years ago in Palestine before the diaspora scattered the Jews all over the world. Their persecution in Europe led to the emergence of modern Zionism, which called for the recreation of the state of Israel at the expense of the local Arab population. The highly unusual circumstances of modern Israel's birth gave rise to two antipodal perceptions of the notion of peace among its citizens.

The first is based on the assumption that, since the Arabs will never accept the implantation of Israel in their midst, peace must be imposed through military deterrence, whether in the form of continued occupation of Arab land or otherwise. In this logic, negotiations for peace are no more than the substitution of one form of deterrence by another more in keeping with the requirements of the age, of modern technology and of the shrinking of the planet into a global village. This is what peace means to Netanyahu.

The second proceeds from the premise that deterrence alone can be counterproductive for Israel in an age of ever-changing values and frames of reference, and that economic incentives such as a Middle East market are no less important than military dissuasion to ensure Israel's security. According to this understanding, the normalisation of Israel's relations with its neighbours and its economic integration into the region are prerequisites for peace. This is what peace means to Peres, as expounded in his book, *The New Middle East*.

For Netanyahu, peace is a zero-sum-game with winners and losers, while for Peres it can be a non-zero-sum-game-plus in which all parties can emerge victorious. However, this latter proposition comes up against the improbability of a conflict of such intractability resolving itself to the benefit of all. Also, it assumes that acknowledging defeat is necessarily harmful, which history has proved not always to be the case. For example, Germany and Japan, which admitted defeat after World War II, are now among the most powerful states on earth. Conversely, when the Soviet Union fell in what can be called a third world war, even if it was fought without one shot being fired, its successor, Russia, was told it had emerged victorious from the debacle. Because of Russia's failure to concede defeat, it remains unable to triumph over adversity, and remains mired in the after-effects of that defeat. The same logic can apply to the situation of the Arabs: by making them believe they have not been defeated, Peres is actually reinforcing the complacency that prevents them from overcoming defeat.

At the same time, there is a basic contradiction in the Labour Party's position. Following the Hamas suicide bombings in Israel, US President

Bill Clinton lost no time in convening the Sharm El-Sheikh summit in a bid to salvage a peace process teetering on the verge of total collapse. For Clinton, the summit had another, yet, objective, which was to bolster Peres' shaky image before Israel's impending elections, by organising a public demonstration of support from key Arab leaders for Peres against both Netanyahu and terrorism. But under the pressure of the electoral campaign, Peres turned his back on the possibility of building a common front with the Arab regimes, and adopted the Israeli rather than the Arab definition of "Arab terrorism". While the former places Hezbollah and Hamas in the same basket, the Arabs consider Hezbollah's activities to be acts of resistance against the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon, not acts of terrorism. And so Peres launched his Grapes of Wrath operation against Hezbollah strongholds, and the blood of innocent victims spilled in Qana cost him the votes of tens of thousands of Israeli Arabs which could have carried him to victory.

It is worth asking whether Peres' defeat at the polls was an inevitable outcome of the inconsistent political line he followed by placing peace before security when addressing his external audiences and security before peace when addressing the Israeli electorate. In counterpart, Netanyahu has consistently placed security before peace. But by refusing to honour the land-for-peace tradeoff on which the entire peace process is based, the Netanyahu approach is a non-starter. Can there be a way out of this historical impasse without convening a new Madrid conference, as proposed by both Netanyahu and Assad (perhaps the only thing on which the two men agree) to set new guidelines for a re-definition of both peace and security?

The pearl of the Orient

By Naguib Mahfouz

Alexandria in the twenties was a European city, where Italian, French, Greek or English were heard far more often than Arabic. The city was beautiful, and so clean that one could have eaten off the streets. Anything from Europe could be found in Alexandria for half the price: cinemas, restaurants, dance halls. But all that was for the foreigners. We could only observe from the outside. The real inhabitants of Alexandria — the itinerant vendors, the shoe-shine boys — lived in the popular quarters, in Ramleh.

There used to be an open-air cinema on Saad Zaghloul Street which had a section reserved for Egyptians. A sign in French read: "For the natives" — meaning, for the real, national citizens. The cinema no longer exists. This all took place during the period of the Capitulations, and Alexandria was the same until the 1936 Treaty, which subjected foreigners to the same law as Egyptians. Previously, even the policemen in Ramleh were foreign. I remember strolling in the streets of Alexandria, singing a song which was rather derogatory toward the police. My companions and I were stopped and taken to the police station by a policeman who thought we were making fun of him. Fortunately, the officer at the station was Egyptian. He understood our situation, but advised us to find some other song to sing.

Time marches on, and, as in our old song, "in the Sudan the policeman has taken off his turban and become a governor..."

Based on an interview by Mohamed Salim.

The Press This Week

Al-Ahram: "Netanyahu's victory is a blow to US policy, which has invested unprecedented efforts, defence pacts, justifications for Israel's alleged war on terrorism and its massacres in Lebanon... Its pretext for all of this was to bolster peace. Now, the Clinton administration can do nothing until after the presidential elections in November that is if Clinton returns to the White House at all!"
(Solama Ahmed Salama, 1 June)

Al-Gomhouria: "The problem with the Israelis is that they want everything for nothing. Peres took the road of peace because Israel had, and will not have, any other road open to it. Nevertheless, he kept hoping to wriggle out from paying the price. He walked a tight rope, and fell and broke his neck."
(Samir Ragab, 1 June)

Akhbar El-Yom: "The Israeli elections have shown the Israelis for what they really are — Israel is not a state, but a military camp and the Israelis are a professional army division which cannot tolerate peace."
(Mahmoud El-Saadani, 1 June)

Al-Gomhouria: "Israel is an army which incorporates a state, not a state which incorporates an army. Israel is built on an alliance between the general, the terrorist and the rabbi. The recent elections have revealed once again the militaristic and religious nature of the state. Political extremism captured the premiership, and religious fundamentalism captured the Knesset."
(Kamel Zouhairi, 2 June)

Al-Ahram: "Israeli voters are still convinced that Israel can bring about an Arab surrender without offering any concessions. The victory of Netanyahu and the alliance of rightist forces means that Israel will not change. The Arabs should realise this and prepare for all eventualities."
(Ihsan Bakr, 2 June)

Al-Wafd: "We would be exaggerating if we thought that Israel is capable of moving against US strategic lines. Neither Netanyahu nor anyone else can break the rules of the game set by the one superpower for a new map of the Middle East which would serve its higher interests."
(Gamal Badawi, 2 June)

Process crossroads

Al-Akhbar: "Whether we draw positive or negative conclusions from Netanyahu's election, Israel has no option before it but peace otherwise it will face international isolation. The wheel of peace has been set in motion and no one can stop it."
(Galal Davdar, 2 June)

Al-Arabi: "Netanyahu does not reject the present settlement, but believes it should be amended according to Likud thinking. Likud's real slogans are 'take-and-take' and 'peace-for-peace' instead of the 'land-for-peace' which is the cornerstone of the US peace process. Hence there will be new US commitments to help the Israelis overcome their fear of peace... the US will try to sell the 'Peres project' to Netanyahu... subject to his conditions."
(Abdullah El-Sinnawi, 3 June)

Al-Shaab: "The difference between Netanyahu and Peres is... precisely the difference between Peres and Netanyahu."
(4 June)

Al-Wafd: "The results of the Israeli elections have thrown the Arabs into confusion... They made us realise how serious the situation is and the necessity of mobilising forces and coordinating positions, a thing that the Arabs have always lacked. This could never have happened if Peres had won."
(Magdi Mohanna, 4 June)

Al-Mussawar: "A just and comprehensive peace can never be achieved in view of the current Arab fragmentation and the Arabs' competing to normalise their relations with Israel... A just and comprehensive peace can only be attained through a concrete Arab stance that commits international parties to implement a just and unbiased peace without any procrastination."
(Makram Mohamed Ahmed, 5 June)

Al-Ahali: "It is high time for the Arabs to awaken, put aside their differences, unite in the face of the dangers threatening them and be prepared for any confrontation... to war or in peace."
(Lufti Waked, 5 June)

Compiled by Hala Saqr



BATMAN

ON

Assad's face, the statesman's grin precedes any reaction to political developments. His pleased expression remains a powerful

spite the folds and creases which mark the features, growing more

numerous and more pronounced with the passing of each day.

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Close up

Salama A. Salama

Why Likud?

The final results of the Israeli elections assuring the victory of the hard-line Right-wing were barely in when several political analysts rushed to cast the blame on the Palestinian opposition, led by Hamas, on the grounds that it was responsible for changing the situation in the Middle East and taking the peace process back to square one.

Many Arab political analysts argued that the suicide attacks in Israel prior to the elections contributed to the Peres-Likud defeat. Peres lost, they lamented, despite the US's intensive rescue efforts in Shamir, El-Sheikh and in the immediate aftermath of the Lebanese massacre, and despite the Arab leaders' efforts to help Peres' electoral campaign. The peace that was on the verge of being achieved was lost. Or so they say.

This is a simplistic view of the situation, which both reveals an unjustified sense of guilt and clears fundamentalist Jews of responsibility. It presents the peace process as a gift which Israel may either grant or withhold, rather than as what it should be: a process depending on the cooperation and understanding of both parties, the strict observance of agreements, and the renunciation of military intervention in imposing a status quo.

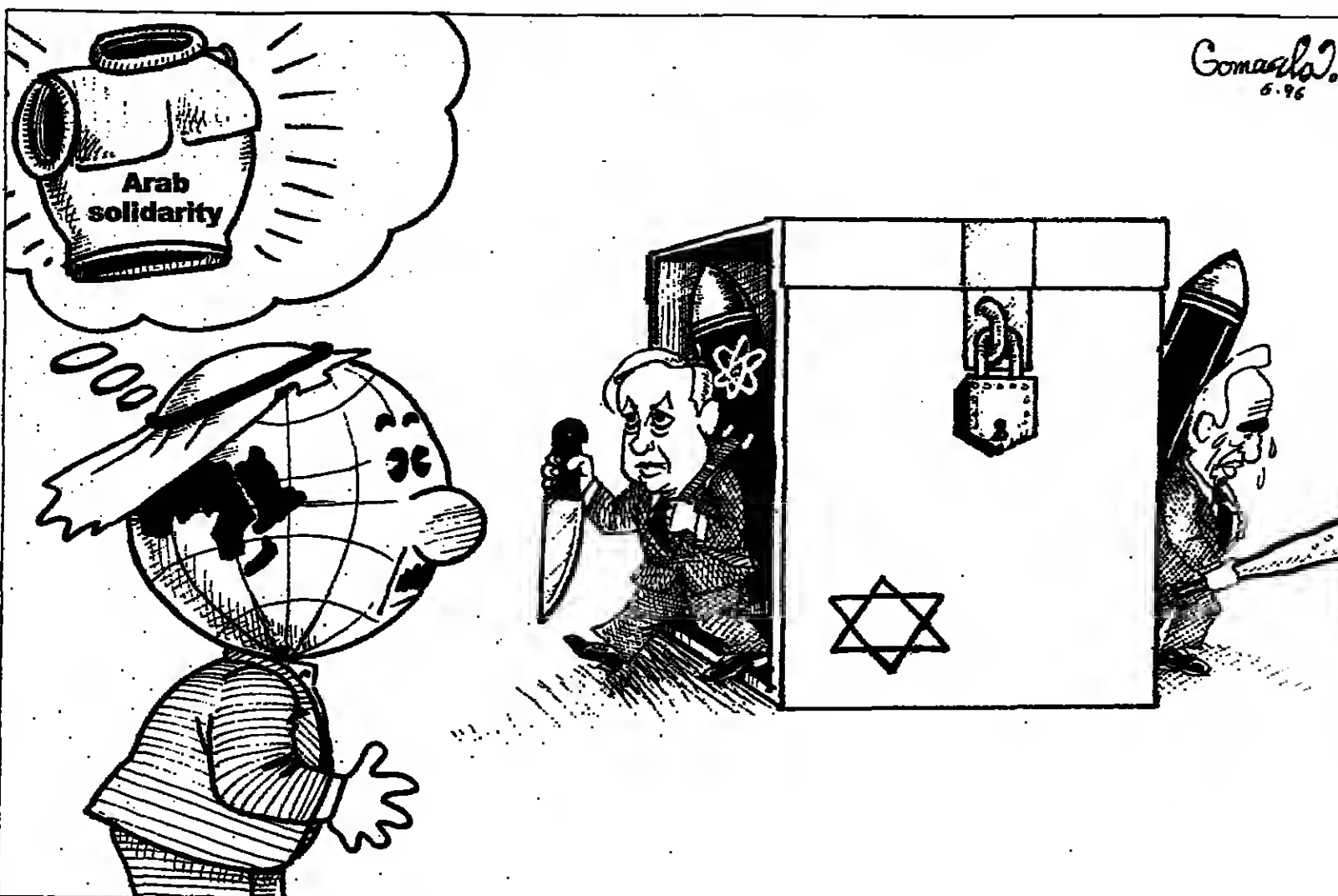
The peace process, though many Arab analysts are unaware of this, ensures the logic of "security first", as called for by Likud. The security in question, of course, is not security for the region as a whole, but only for Israel and the Israelis — regardless of the humiliation and suffering of the Palestinian people, and despite all the land seized by Israel from Lebanon and Syria, land which is still under Israeli occupation.

If the Hamas attacks in Israel increased feelings of fear and hatred which reflected on the voting, these attacks were brought on by Israeli violence and expressed the religious, fundamentalist groups' opposition to the peace process and the agreements signed with the Palestinians. These sentiments reached their apogee with the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin — one of the most hard-line Israeli leaders in dealing with the Palestinian Intifada. This murder proved to be only the tip of an iceberg of hatred, fanaticism and opposition to peace: feelings deeply rooted in Israeli society.

It is unnecessary for us to recall the massacre that took place in the Hebron mosque, the assassination of many Hamas leaders by the Mossad, or the long-term closures of Gaza and the West Bank.

So the victory in Tel Aviv of the Likud and the ultra-orthodox factions is not the result of the presence of a limited number of Palestinian extremists; it is, rather, the natural expression of a large sector of the Israeli community which still believes that a show of strength can bring the situation back to its pre-peace process point. It is a current backed by powerful lobbies in America, which Rabin himself confronted on his last visit to the United States. Furthermore, the blank cheque signed by the Clinton administration to Israel's continuous violations of international law, the financial and military assistance handed out with no concern for the logic of equilibrium in the region, the continuous assertions that Israel must ensure its security and its nuclear hegemony — all these encourage the enemies of peace and further increase their thirst for power.

Once we stop finding excuses for the enemies of peace inside Israel, then we can stop crying over Peres' defeat. Everyone, including the Israelis, must realise that peace is a two-way street and a joint responsibility, to be borne by all.



Soapbox

Time for a change

Netanyahu has pledged that the peace process would continue. But the substance of his victory speech was no different from the themes of his electoral campaign, which centred on how to obtain peace and security without conceding territories occupied in 1967. His discourse overflows with threats to the Arabs; military muscle-flexing is likely in the near future, especially against Syria and Lebanon.

Attempts to retrieve Arab territories occupied in 1967 so far have been limited to persuading Israel that economic and political pay-offs would be the reward for withdrawal. Peres was more or less willing to respond to this formula. While Netanyahu, the Likud, and the Right-wing parties that will form the next Israeli government show some interest in the returns of peace with the Arabs, they are convinced that these may be had without an inch of land being conceded. The Israelis have two choices: to take maximum advantage of the Arabs' weakness, or to stick to the status quo. In either case, no territorial concessions will be made. The Arabs could either opt for the status quo, or take up the challenge of a military showdown. It is clear, therefore, that there is a 50 per cent chance of military confrontation in the next few years of Right-wing rule in Israel.

Logic dictates that the Arabs try the diplomatic option pursued since 1977. But there is no escape from the urgent necessity to upgrade our military capability if we are, one day, to retrieve our land. This shift of direction in theory and practice is essential. Anything short of a genuine pan-Arab project entailing the formation of a joint deterrent capability, at the very least, will have no credibility in the eyes of the Arab people. Worse still, it will mean nothing to the Likud-led government in Israel.



This week's soapbox speaker is deputy director of the Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies.

The battle for our minds

Less than two months after the massacres in Lebanon, Israel is back in the limelight while the Arabs look on helplessly, writes **Edward Said**. The issue, however, is not Israeli, or even Arab tyranny; the tragedy is our continued acceptance of crude dictatorships and brute force

Israeli Labour Party's view of the peace process is the authorised one because of which it has been impossible even to think about Oslo except as a good thing. Thus Israel speaks for and in a sense represents Palestinians in what Israel has considered to be a decently advantageous peace process.

An ironic result of Lewis's reporting has been Iyad al-Seraj's imprisonment by Arafat. This is a perfect example of why it is that today Arab societies and their rulers — we must not detach them from each other, as one in effect produces and is a mirror image of the other — have given backwardness and underdevelopment a new sort of clarity. Arafat's model of rule is based entirely on coercion and personal gain: what he does not like or he thinks opposes him must be blotted out, made to disappear, put behind bars. It has not occurred to him, as a disciple of Saddam Hussein, that people and societies do not work that simply, and that to think that the only way to deal with something you don't like is to put it away, is an assumption that cannot forever be maintained. Such is the power of human thought and resourcefulness that Seraj's courage and arrest will in fact create more courage, protest, and resistance among Palestinians, not less, as the obdurate Arafat believes. To the Palestinian Authority everything — including human rights — must be sacrificed to a wilful reduction of "the peace process." Only thus will Arafat survive, he believes, and in this way he will be carried along with his Israeli mirror-image, the dishonest Peres.

In the overall media context shaped by the US, Shimon Peres has been seen as the man who must win the elections, if the country is going to remain a bastion of democracy and progress. In the short run therefore US foreign policy in the Middle East was based almost exclusively on helping Peres to win. In effect this meant that whatever he did, he received unconditional US support. A Likud victory (always, in my opinion, more likely) was considered to be a catastrophe that would threaten the peace process, undermine US influence, produce a ruinous instability in the region. The paradox is of course that now that Netanyahu has emerged victorious, US policy will most probably take on his agenda (as it did Shamir's for years), and continue an extremely high level of support for Israel.

Stranger still is that all the Arab leaders have believed the same thing about the importance of a Peres victory: they have accordingly done everything in their power not to make it hard for him. This was shamefully evident during Operation Grapes of Wrath when, except for a few popular demonstrations in Arab capitals, the official response to Israel's criminality and ruthlessness was, to put it mildly, muted. Even Yasser Arafat under whose authority Palestinians have continued to lose land, essential economic power, and social progress to Israel's "peace" policy under Peres, thought his main priority as Palestinian leader was to support Peres in the elections.

In all this, Israeli propaganda has achieved an important success. It has made opposition to its policies (including the closures, and military operations) seem tantamount to opposing peace; it has convinced the

world that it is striving for peace, although of course it wages war; it has elevated itself and its 4 million citizens to the central focal point of the Arab and Muslim worlds, which comprise 200 million and 1 billion respectively; it has compelled the Palestinian leadership to believe that any unnecessary resistance on its part will upset Peres, and weaken his appeal to the electorate, as if the Israeli electorate was the only one that counted.

A report in *Davar* by the respected Israeli journalist Daniel Ben-Simon on May 10 states that at Tabah the Israeli negotiators not only insisted on seeing Abu Mazen's speech before he gave it, but also changed and rewrote most of it the night before he delivered it. All this was supposed to be about helping Peres to help the peace process. Such excesses give a new meaning to preserving the status quo, which used to signify holding on to what one has, but which now means aggressively robbing your peace partner. In the meantime even a semblance of Arab solidarity has been dissipated, with the result that innocent Lebanese civilians are murdered wantonly while their leaders in the leading capitals either look the other way or press on with business as usual.

Were this lamentable state of affairs simply the result of Israeli military power and the ascendancy of Likud then it would be possible to say that Arab defeatism was perhaps inevitable. But it is not that. The real issues are human and moral. These are capable of being addressed if we retain and are willing to employ our rudimentary capacities of rationality and will. Israel's pre-eminence is first of all the result of work and organisation dedicated to one main task, eventually giving Israel assent in the minds not only of its citizens, but over many Americans and Arabs. For this task Israel's supporters understood something essential to modern politics which has so far escaped the Arabs, namely, a policy of persuasion and consent where information and communication are concerned is much more effective in the long run than insistent propaganda based on falsehood and exaggeration.

This is not to say that the Western media, for example, are totally free and independent; they are not of course since they operate according to the economic and ideological constraints of the giant corporations (owned by people like Rupert Murdoch) that run them. But their methods are to try to seduce consumers of the news by employing simplified, appealing images actually based on reality which win approval with minimum resistance on the part of American newspaper readers and TV-viewers. In five decades Israel has solidified its position as a peace-loving state surrounded by vicious enemies who want to exterminate the Jews. Israel never attacks, it "retaliates" in "self-defence." Israel values human life; Israel is a Western country; Israel is necessary for the defence of Western values against fundamentalist, terrorist Islam.

There is a further effectiveness to this information policy. The global economy is undergoing a massive shift in the Northern countries away from industrial production towards knowledge production. By the middle of this century 60% of the GNP in the US was based not on steel, coal and automobile manufacture but on the

goods and services offered by computers, high-speed electronic communication, media, management, and consultancies. It became possible to use labour intensive Third World countries like Nicaragua, Mexico, Malaysia, and China to produce the consumer goods (clothing, furniture, TV sets, automobile parts, etc.) which were planned for and managed in the West. And governments themselves relied more on the media and the distribution of images than they did on direct coercion and police forces, although in the US there is now a political reaction to this insofar as it has become necessary to regulate the permanent underclass in black or Hispanic urban ghettos by brutal police violence.

The revolution according to Ronald Reagan (known as the Great Communicator) entirely finished the mainstream media as a really independent force in society, they were turned into extensions of power, never more evident than during the Gulf War when they fought Operation Desert Storm as a department of the US military. The collusion between most US journalists and corporate or governmental authority is now almost complete. Alternative views are marginalised as "minority" or "extreme" while powerful white male pundits and Washington "insiders" play golf with the president. News has become a branch of entertainment in which celebrities like Dan Rather or Peter Jennings, indistinguishable from each other as to content, compete for the title of most reliable newsmen, as if reading the news from a prepared script had anything to do with journalism or truth.

In this situation Israel has again managed to maintain its public image. (Israel has benefited from every change in the international system and it does the same thing with changes in the media systems.) Less than two months after its murderous attacks on Lebanon Israel is now at the centre of things, as the elections results have seized world attention (largely through the help of CNN). Netanyahu has now become the man of the hour.

But whether Netanyahu emerged victorious or not, the style of "peace" was and is going to be dictated by Israel, with the other Arabs, especially the weak Palestinians, completely under its thumb. Our tragedy is that as a people and culture we have not liberated ourselves from a crude model of power, forgetting that knowledge, information, and consent are more important than brute force and policemen. The only way to begin the change is to do what Al-Seraj and others have done, change the battlefield from the street to the mind. Speak out, tell the truth, refuse to accept clichés and ideological constructions, examine and reflect concretely on the nonsense produced by the media.

The struggle is not only against Israeli and Arab tyranny and injustice; it is for our right as a people to move into the modern world, away from fear, the ignorance and superstition of backward looking religion, and the basic injustice of dispossession and disenfranchisement. For those of us who speak and write, our fundamental issue is the right of free expression (and not who won the Israeli elections), which no appeals to security, military emergency, or national unity can continue to abrogate. There is no other way of achieving the minimum goals of a decent life without also translating ourselves from a primitive to a modern condition in which for the first time in our modern history leaders are directly accountable for their policies to the people. We should stop waiting for "things to improve" or for "better leaders." The Arabs as a whole have created their own weakness and the incompetent leaders that have been tolerated for so long. Surely we must do better than that.

Reflections By Hani Shukrallah

Peace process marching on

"Peres doomed Qana, so Qana doomed Peres." The Independent's Robert Fisk quoted a Lebanese, a former prisoner of the Israelis, as commenting on the results of the Israeli elections. It is very likely that it did. Peres lost to Netanyahu by some 29,000 votes. Israel's Palestinians reportedly cast 80,000 empty ballots in the premiership election, punishing Peres for his savage onslaught on Lebanon and the Qana massacre. Had they heeded Arafat's feverish appeals, Peres could have won by 50,000 votes. Unlike his "peace partners", Arafat's magnanimity knows no bounds. The most insignificant attack on Israel, by forces over which the Palestinian leader has no control, provokes not only collective punishment of the Palestinian people in Arafat's "self-rule" areas, but an immediate, and often indefinite, discontinuation of whatever negotiations happen to be taking place at the time. Arafat, on the other hand, turns the other cheek. He met with Peres only one day after the Qana massacre, where the Israeli leader probably reassured him that Operation Grapes of Wrath "had motives... but not goals," as he later declared publicly. But all of us are so high-minded.

This was not the first time in recent memory that the Arabs were dramatically reminded that nearly 20 per cent of the population of the "Jewish State" is Palestinian Arab. It was a little over a year ago, after all, that "Israeli Arab"

Knesset members, equally unheeded of Arafat's, and other prudent Arabs, advice, all but toppled the Labour government, then under Rabin. At the time, the Israeli "peacekeepers" government had confiscated Palestinian land in East Jerusalem for Jewish settlements. Israel's Arab neighbours rose up in furious fury, much as they did following the Qana massacre. They soon breathed a collective sigh of relief, however, when Rabin, lashing out at Likud for joining hands with Arabs to topple his government, decided to freeze the confiscation order. "We were prepared to stand up against the whole world, the Arab League and the UN Security Council... the last thing we expected was that the Likud... would harm the decision over the development of Jerusalem," Rabin lamented.

Then, the Arabs were grateful that Israel's Palestinians had too much dignity to listen to their realistic advice. Today, there is waiting and gnashing of teeth. Expressions of dignity and moral principle, unfortunately, are not always adaptable to realpolitik solutions.

The "peace process" will go on regardless, I am convinced. There is no reason why it should not. It has been, under Labour, and will remain, under Likud, an Israeli peace, or more precisely an American-Israeli peace. The final arrangements of this peace have been set already, and are patently obvious for anyone who is not blinded by ideology, rhetoric or self-interest. The details and trappings, of course, may and will vary under a Likud

government, but, Labour or Likud, Jerusalem remains the undivided and eternal capital of Israel. Labour or Likud, the River Jordan is to remain Israel's "security border"; there is to be no dismantling of Jewish settlements in the West Bank; Palestinian "rule" is to be confined to densely populated cantons, surrounded and besieged by settlements and an extensive network of military roads (to protect the settlers). Under Labour or Likud there will be no return for Palestinian refugees — whatever shape the Palestinian entity takes, it is not to be the homeland for which over four million diaspora Palestinians, degraded and persecuted by virtually every country in the world, have longed for decades.

The peace process has already made a farce of Palestinian statehood. The fundamental bases of the nation-state are sovereignty and territorial integrity. All the double-speak of the global village — that no state is really sovereign in a world of multi-nationals and human rights organisations, etc. — cannot hide the glaring truth that, whatever Arafat and his government call themselves, they haven't a hope in hell of winning the bare trappings of either — with Peres or with Netanyahu, with Clinton or with Dole.

There is an interesting aspect to all of this which further substantiates the conclusion that Netanyahu and Likud do not mean the end of the peace process. This lies in the remarkable way in which Labour and Likud have been exchanging peace plans

during the past two decades. We may recall that Palestinian self-rule, though implemented by Labour, was a Likud plan — actually spelled out in the form of an agreement in the Camp David Accords between Sadat and Begin. Labour favoured what was called "the Jordanian option" — i.e., extending some limited form of Jordanian "sovereignty" over the densely-populated areas of the West Bank, while of course, and in all cases, maintaining the settlements, the security border along the Jordan River, the armed presence, etc.

Even more interesting to recall, in light of Netanyahu's position on the Syrian Golan Heights, it was Labour which held that sovereignty over the Golan was non-negotiable on security grounds; for Likud, sovereignty over the Golan was negotiable, but that over "Judea and Samaria" was not. Whatever happens with the Golan — and Netanyahu may well "mellow" in this regard — the most interesting twist in the plot is probably yet to come: a move toward some form of Labour's Jordanian option, under a Netanyahu/Likud-led government.

In fact, the most likely "outcome" of the peace process as far as the Palestinian question is concerned is going to be a combination of Likud's self-rule and Labour's Jordanian options. The major ingredient introduced by Oslo is, of course, Arafat and his drastically shrunk and subdued PLO. This ingredient was rejected in the past by both parties, and is now accepted by both — for ex-

cellent reasons, and regardless of the ramblings of the Israeli extreme Right.

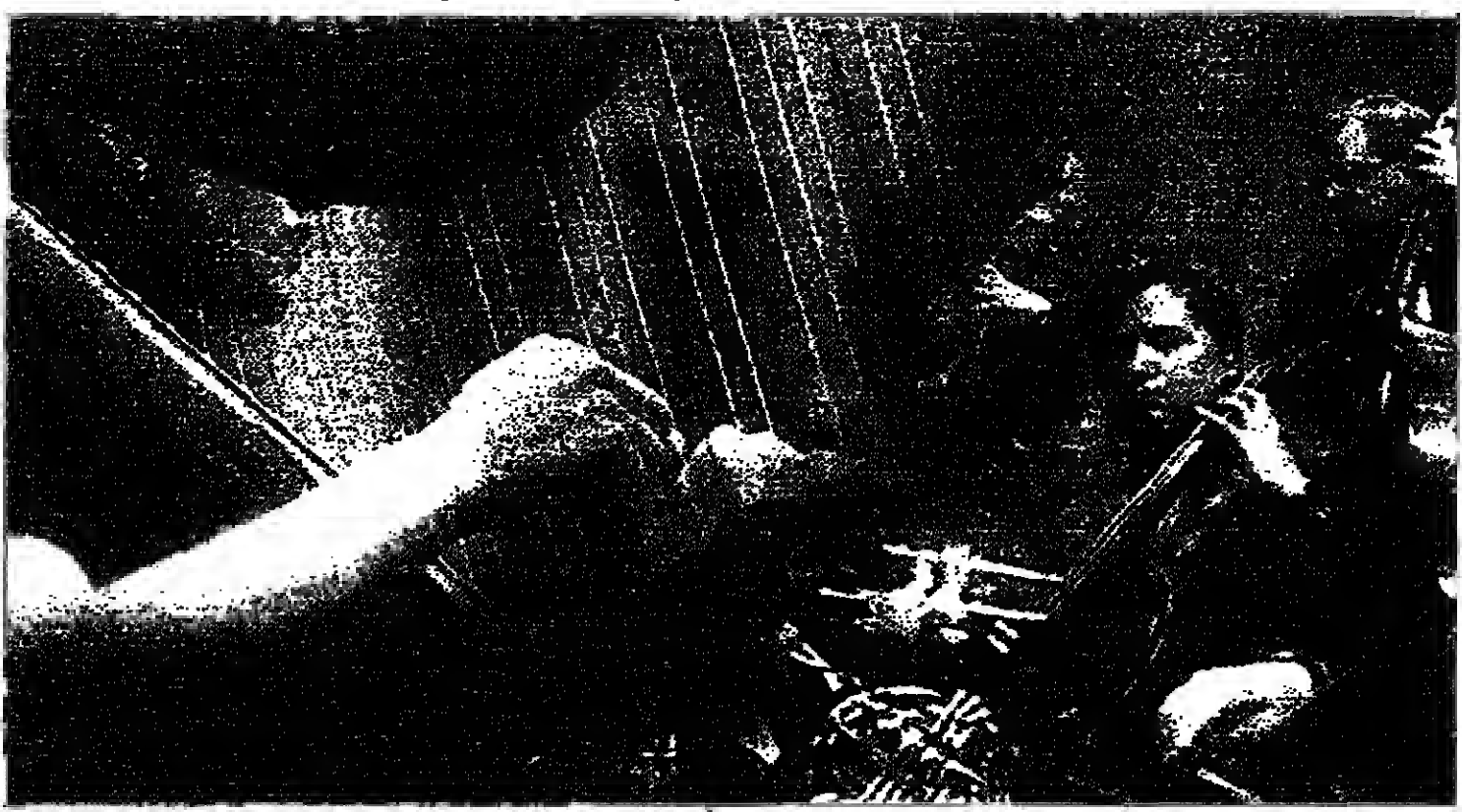
In substance, the arrangement will maintain Palestinian self-rule within the above-mentioned limits, extend some form of nominal Jordanian sovereignty over these same areas (most likely taking a federal form of some kind — Palestinian-Jordanian or Palestinian-Jordanian-Israeli), and place the whole package under Israeli military, political and economic domination. To make life easier for all, this may well be achieved not by Likud or Labour but by a "national unity" government of the two.

As for the cute formulas with which Arab analysts love to juggle — land-for-peace, or peace-for-peace, or security-for-peace, or any combination thereof — these, to my mind, are invented by Israeli and American academics with the sole purpose of giving their Arab counterparts, analysts and commentators, something to play around with as they work to justify a process whose twists and turns always manage to shock and/or surprise them, and over which they have no control.

This is not to say, however, that the Israeli elections, described as historic, earthshaking, etc., were without significance. Their fundamental significance, however, is to be found not in their effect on the peace process, but in the heart of Israel itself.

Comet watching

David Blake treads the great white way and sees a brighter light on the mountain tops



The Brigham Young University Chamber Orchestra

The Brigham Young University Chamber Orchestra: Clyn Barus, director; Cairo Choral Society; Larry Catlin, director; Johann Herrel, Concerto for trumpet and strings no. 3; Bret Jackson, soloist; Ernest Chausson, Poème for violin and orchestra; Beethoven, Symphony No. 5 in C minor, op. 67; Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Hiawatha's Wedding Feast; Farid Fadel, tenor soloist; Leonard Bernstein, Overture to West Side Story; Ewart Hall, The American University in Cairo; 22 May

Next stop Cairo. Out of the blue. Surprises are always a pleasure. They take the breath away. You could drop dead if the surprise is of the right sort — or spring into life.

The life spring is what happened with the Brigham Young Orchestra. The big audience at the Ewart Hall spring to life when it started to play under its dynamic but unshowy director Clyn Barus. Visibly and spiritually everyone listened sprang to life.

Not everyone has heard of the Brigham Young Orchestra, but we heard them on 22 May. They all looked about 10 but were probably 20. Everything was quite simple. They assembled: good humoured, generous looking and natural players getting ready for the fray. Out came Clyn Barus. He took his applause, turned his back on the hall and then the orchestra went into Herrel's Concerto for trumpet and strings. Trumpets mean action, peace or war, dancing or dying. The audience mentally began to dance. Trumpets mean music on high, let the party commence. And with this piece it did. It was late 18th century, a high period. Bret Jackson on his trumpet did what all good trumpeters do. He brought down the sky in silver blades of accurate sound. With complete assurance through the three short movements he blew. It was too short — more would have been greater pleasure. The sense of panoply and animation was overwhelming. The kids from the Brigham Young were here and playing for their lives.

They needed Barus of course, but their playing almost dismissed authority from a podium, so involved were they in their own listening. And that would be Barus' approach. So director and orchestra needed each other. The next item was Chausson's Poème for violin and orchestra. More

than a poem, it is a dream, a vision. It glides through paradise. This piece, like a spirit who has a body, a violin, speaks and croons and slides through sheer sounds of the celestial heights. All done by a violinist without a name. She came, she played and she too conquered. A girl from the tales of Lafontaine, she and Chausson were a genuine musical visitation.

As if this were not enough for ending the first half of the programme, they played the Beethoven 5th. One of the symphonies of the world, even heretics know it. It's there like prayer and daily bread. The Brigham Young opened the store cupboard, let in the light and chucked out the rags and old clothes and warm tempos clinging to it like barnacles. They burst the classic mold and out came the symphony and the bright lights, of which particular light we had no time to ponder. They just went on like a ride through the four movements which anyway are all labelled allegro. The band positively shuddered and the music streaked along with every note and phrase clear and defined for audience listening. It sent everything up into high air. No one needed any criticism, just listening to clear air. In the strange slow-stepping part of the symphony we were eavesdropping on a camel trip through space and things settled into a voyage. The brass, from beginning to end, was sweet, clear and joyful. To the big bustle there were no huge, arched spaces to cross; it was almost chamber orchestra narrative. All the connections between the build-ups were poised and as hard-edged as a photograph.

What are they playing? Beethoven's 5th in new clothes or without any? This can't go on! It's out done to be as fresh as this. But it did go on till the end. The Brigham Young showed there will always be a new Beethoven where they arrive. At the finish: clamorous shouts as the audience stood and stamped for more.

The rest of the concert was a vital de-celeration. Larry Catlin had to play Cowboys and Indians with Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's rendition of Longfellow's Hiawatha's Wedding Feast. This is long, and not lovely. Deep into Victoria's England, at least musically she knew what she was doing, so what she really thought of this farrago is not recorded. Perhaps a rude noise to her friend Verdi. If you are a child, you

can adore the jiggly rhythms of Hiawatha the poem. Red Indian race reclamation, he was everyone's darling. But, as music at least, it is a cruel drag. Catlin and the Cairo Choral Society soldiered on. Hiawatha's Wedding Feast has its charms here and there and the words were mostly clearly delivered by the chorus. Catlin seemed wilted by the sheer repetitiveness of the blocks of sound building up to the wedding show. War drums muffled the stamping dance of squaws passed over. The whole huge thing lumbered on and at last came down like a high redwood to the lumberjack's blade.

There must be thanks for a piece performed, but it was Beethoven and Chausson who sent the concert to the mountaintops.

Cairo Symphony Orchestra: Pops 4; George Gershwin, An American in Paris and Concerto in F major for piano and orchestra; Michael Lewin, soloist; Yoacov Bergman, conductor; Main Hall, Cairo Opera House; 25 May

Gershwin — easy joy. This concert began with the orchestral overture to An American in Paris. The Cairo Symphony with Bergman to assist enjoyed itself on this Gershwin night. That is the way it should be. Gershwin's music is among other things irresistibly alluring, sometimes of the earth, sometimes of the stars, but always of a place — New York City. The Old Apple spins for him as for few others, and all there is to do is move around and spin with the notes.

He, Cole Porter and Ellington were miracles: they produced a sound like no other ever before. Degas, Renoir: Paris for sight. Porter, Ellington, Gershwin: New York for hearing. Their music involves you, worries, depresses and lifts you. Yet, like the music of Abdel-Rahim, it all belongs to an era which has gone. Their contemporaneity is about 98 years old. So much for classicism. And the music of the world moves faster as the century comes to an end. Gershwin sounds positively neandertal, like news pictures of royalty and gang mobsters. They all go down the black hole, royals and mobs, but music climbs back into the light. So Gershwin is a form of archeology. Egypto-Broadway. He cannot dis-

appear because of his notes.

This concert was a lot of notes, and a triumph for the Cairo Symphony Orchestra and Bergman. Though his white way of Gershwin is way out of the Cairo Symphony's territory, the effect was fairly true to type. The concert's main take was the Concerto in F. It is full of melodies; that is, it depends on what is meant by melody. Show-Boat and Beethoven, they both relate to the same thing, the opening of the prison act of Fido: birds gotta swim, fish gotta fly in best as a musical twist.

But the Concerto in F is stately. The music hovers between two worlds in the opening movement. The whole thing is virtuosic, and it sweeps into a thrilling finish. Michael Lewin was a lovely player: warm to hot, generous and deep into the movement, and flame of the new Gershwin sounds — jazz redressed on a visit to the classical world. Gershwin is very appealing. In this concerto he is Gatsby making an important up-town visit. He always remembered the New York of his early days. You had to have class and Gershwin was an authority. He impresses. The second movement is one of his purest pieces of genius. The sounds are moonlight over the city of canyons, Broadway wrapped in a love mist, winds rising up from the canyons to flutter or kill, all done with a gift of elegant roses. In this movement the piano steals in among flutes to a Gershwin melody, his own absolute brand: the piano hovers and climbs up and up to a top, holds it and then without any warning, does a two octave drop. It was dangerous, gorgeous, typical — and human. The piano was well behaved to begin. Then, forgetting manners, it lashes out into gaudy satiny display — some peacock on parade leaving no room for comment. It is truly musical and with a flash illuminates an entire age.

The last movement is tribal. He, the pianist, has his head. The playing must be what was once called nifty. It is some genuine achievement to realise this on the piano. And Lewin got it right. And so did the orchestra.

A catalogue of New York pictures flows away over the city's night towers as the F major closes down until next time. Then came the Porgy and Bess symphonic arrangement. They played it for joy. Only one thing: don't let George stay away too long.

play and had to admit, however unwillingly, that underneath all the technical frumpies and the thick layers of erotic imagery, and despite the haunting atmosphere and rituals, the play was essentially a naive political parable, a cleverly disguised straightforward political message. This explains why the princess seems split down the middle, half woman, half symbol, with the two parts repelling each other and refusing to cohere. It would have helped, perhaps, if Abdel-Sabour had made the princess kill her lover, as she had every reason to do, instead of waiting for the poet (an embarrassingly obvious symbol of the nation) to do her own dirty work and deliver the moral lesson. Back in 1969 when the play was written — within less than two years of the shattering June defeat — or in 1971, when it was first performed after Nasser's death and Sadat's accession to power, the optimistic end and the poet's cautionary barangue must have struck the audience as having immediacy and urgent political relevance. Indeed, to further underline the political message, as if it was not already sufficiently clear, Salah Abdel-Sabour, at the request of director Nabil El-Afifi, added a few more lines which celebrate the end of the reign of darkness and terror and the arrival of a new dawn. Sadly, the audience of 1996 know better, they have the benefit of hindsight.

Listings

EXHIBITIONS

Fathi Hassan (Paintings)
Mashrabiya Gallery, 8 Champagne St., Downtown. Tel 578 4494. Daily exc Fri, 11am-8pm. Until 13 June.

Robert Gutowski (Paintings)
Netherlands Institute for Archaeology and Arabic Studies, 1 Dr Mahmoud Azmi St. Zamalek. Tel 340 0076. Daily exc Sat & Sun, 9am-2pm. Until 7 June.

Ghada Abu Ghazaleh (Paintings)
Salama Gallery, 36/A Ahmed Orabi St. Mohandessin. Tel 346 3242. Daily exc Fri, 10am-2.30pm & 5.30pm-9pm. Until 9 June.

Ingrid Gaiser (Paintings)
Cairo-Berlin Gallery, 17 Youssouf El-Guindi St. Bab El-Louk. Tel 393 1764. Daily exc Sun, 12pm-8pm. Until 15 June.

Javier Olaso, Lola Del Castillo, Verónica Roca & Martín Roca
El-Hanout, Opera House Grounds, Giza. Tel 340 6861. Daily 10am-10pm. Until 15 June. Paintings and graphic works.

The Journalism and Mass Communication Darkroom Workshop
Sawy Gallery, Main Campus, AUC, El-Sheikh Rihan St. Tel 357 5422. Daily exc Fri & Sat, 9am-noon & 6pm-9pm. 10-14 June. Photographs by students of AUC's JMC Department.

Miniatures
Espence Gallery, 1 El-Sherif St. Downtown. Tel 393 1699. Daily exc Fri, 10am-2pm & 6pm-9pm. Until 18 June.

Student Exhibition
French Cultural Centre, 27 Sabri Abu Alam St. Ismailia Sq. Heliopolis. Tel 417 4824/417 4825. Daily exc Fri & Sat, 10am-2pm & 3pm-5pm. Until 19 June. Hoda El-Guindy's students, who have worked at the centre's atelier during 1995/96, exhibit their paintings.

Youssef Mamounk (Paintings)
Foundation for Hellenic Culture, 18 St. Menoufia St. near El-Attarin. Tel 483 1598. Until 20 June.

The Museum of Mr and Mrs Mohamed Mahmoud Khalil
1 Kefor El-Akhdid St. Dokki. Tel 336 2376. Daily exc Mon, 10am-6pm. Egypt's largest collection of nineteenth century European art, amassed by the late Mahmoud Khalil, including works by Courbet, Van Gogh, Gauguin, Monet and Rodin.

Egyptian Museum
Tahrir St., Downtown. Tel 575 4319. Daily exc Fri, Sat, Sun, 9am-11.15am & 1pm-3pm.

Outstanding collection of Pharaonic and Ptolemaic treasures and the controversial mummies' room.

Coptic Museum
Mar Girgis, Old Cairo. Tel 362 5706. Daily exc Fri, 9am-4pm; Fri 9am-11am & 1pm-3pm.

Founded in 1910, the museum houses the largest collection of Coptic art and artefacts in the world.

Islamic Museum
Port Said St. Ahmed Maher St. Bab El-Khalq. Tel 390 9930/390 1520. Daily exc Fri, 9am-4pm; Fri 9am-11.30am & 2pm-4pm. A vast collection of Islamic arts and crafts including mashrabiya, woodwork and coins, drawn from Egypt's Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk periods and other countries in the Islamic world.

Museum of Modern Egyptian Art
Opera House Grounds, Giza. Tel 340 6861. Daily exc Mon, 10am-1pm & 3pm-5pm. A permanent display of paintings and sculpture, showing the modern art movement in Egypt from its earliest pioneers to latest practitioners.

Mohamed Nagui Museum
Château Pyramides, 9 Mahmoud El-Guindi St. Giza. A museum devoted to the paintings of Mohamed Nagui (1888-1956).

Mohamed Makhtar Museum
Tahrir St. Giza. Daily exc Sun and Mon, 9am-1.30pm. A permanent collection of works

by the sculptor Mahmoud Makhtar (d. 1934), whose granite monument to Saad Zaghloul stands near Qasr El-Nil Bridge.

FILMS

Indian: Cultural Centre, 3 El-Sheikh El-Marsafi St. Zamalek. Tel 340 8791.
11 Pastime (1995), starring Massimo Troisi and Philippe Noiret. The film is a must-see classic. 9 June, 7pm.
11 Comune Senso del Pudore (1976), directed by Alberto Sordi and starring Claudia Cardinale. 11 June, 7pm.

French Films
French Cultural Centre, Modrasset El-Hogouq El-Ferensya St. Monrovia. Tel 334 7679.
118 Barons de Hachhausen (1978), an animation film directed by 118age. 6 June, 7pm.
Les Portes de la Nuit (1946), directed by M. Carné and starring Yves Montand. 10 June, 7pm.

French Cultural Centre, Modrasset El-Hogouq El-Ferensya St. Monrovia. Tel 334 7679.
118 Barons de Hachhausen (1978), an animation film directed by 118age. 6 June, 7pm.
Les Portes de la Nuit (1946), directed by M. Carné and starring Yves Montand. 10 June, 7pm.

French Cultural Centre, 27 Sabri Abu Alam St. Ismailia Sq. Heliopolis. Tel 417 4824/417 4825.
Les Trois Mousquetaires (1953), directed by A. Huchelle and starring G. Marshall. 10 June, 7pm.
La Femme en Bleu (1972), directed by M. Deville and starring Michel Piccoli. 11 June, 7pm.

Tora-San Goes Religious
Japanese Cultural Centre, 106 Qasr El-Aini St. Garden City. 6 June, 6pm.
Tora-San, an itinerant peddler, visits a temple and finds himself leading the service in place of the head priest. He then falls in love with the priest's daughter.

Commercial cinemas change their programmes every Monday. The information provided is valid through to Sunday after which it is wise to check with the cinemas.

Ya Donia... Ya Gharabi (My Life... My Passion)
Rivoli II, 26 July St. Downtown. Tel 575 5053. Daily 1pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm. Ramses Hilton II, Corniche El-Nil St. Tel 574 7436. Daily 10.30pm, 1.30pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm. Romy, Romy Sq. Heliopolis. Tel 258 0344. Daily 10am, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Tiba I, Nasr City. Tel 262 9407. Daily 10.30am.

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Music

Of dust and fire

Nehad Selaiha revisits Salah Abdel-Sabour's Princess at El-Tali'a

Sabour, the late poet's daughter, whom director Nasser Abdel-Moneim had chosen for the title role. The 50-minute performance, however, left me deeply muddled and disturbingly cold. All my smug critical complacency was shattered: the play simply did not work on stage and, however vexing, one had to admit the fault. Was it perhaps the fault of this particular production? Of this director? I wondered as I cast about for a reassuring explanation or, rather, for a handy scapegoat. The production had its obvious faults of course: it was too rigidly schematic in conception; far too symmetrical in design, and all too woodenly elegant in execution.

The set, representing a bare, humble cottage in

Time past is not time present. Below, reviews of three books on Cairo and Alexandria, past and present, and one on moulids through the ages

Returning to tell

La Descente au Paradis (Descent to Paradise), Paula Jacques. Paris: Editions Mercure de France, 1995
Quand le soleil était chaud (When the Sun was Hot), Josette Alia. Paris: Editions Grasset et Fasquelle, 1992

Long before the present century, foreigners came to Egypt on business or for pleasure, looked around, were enchanted or repulsed, and wrote about their experiences. Lawrence Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet*, a world-wide success, gave the world its "leaves of noblesse". Some very good novels followed, among which are Olivia Manning's *Levant Trilogy* and Michael Pearce's delightful "Mamoun Zapt" detective stories. And since the 1980s, artists, singers and writers, born and educated here and forced to emigrate because of political and social changes, have come back on the scene in their works.

From afar, they strive to recreate the world they left behind in the 1950s and '60s. But the glow of creation was lost with Durrell. These are no masterpieces, only entertaining works. Durrell's world is multidimensional, each event opening a new plot — be it spiritual, psychological or mystic, his characters evading complete knowledge, their inner selves out of the reader's reach. Those who followed in his footsteps seem to have more limited ambitions. To revive their memories? To use them as background, perhaps.

Paula Jacques, a Jew from Egypt now working as a journalist in France, wrote her first novel, *Lumière de l'Œil* (Light of the Eye or Nur El-Ein) in 1980. *La Descente au Paradis* (Descent to Paradise), her fifth novel, is set in Cairo and tells the story of a lower middle-class Jewish family. The time: the second world war, before the historical meeting of the Great Powers at the Mena House. The setting: a small village, Nazlet El-Gama — the Descent of Paradise of the title — where the family lives because of financial trouble. The cast: on one side the four members of the family, Orientals, striving to look and talk like Europeans, and the villagers and their *omda* (village chieftain). On the other side, there are the two somewhat sadistic, but supposedly cool and efficient British officers. They are sent to evacuate the village for top secret security reasons (everyone in town knows what they are, of course). The language: a rich mixture of Cairene French and *baladi* Arabic, with juicy insults from every community in the country. The plot: the father refuses to leave but is faced with the hostility of everyone else out to grab as much as possible from the authorities (the *omda* gets the lion's share, of course).

Everything happens in an atmosphere charged with Mediterranean drama, mixed with the right amount of racy

humour and wit. Each of the characters gets involved in a sub-plot which leads us further along to other places — the bureau of the British secret service (the narrator falls in love with a young woman whose letters he is censoring), a room in a cheap hotel and a sleazy Don Juan, the kind they used to call "Levantines" — up and down the different levels of society. It is an attractive trip, yes, but one that leaves no deep traces on the reader's mind.

Josette Alia, a journalist, came to the Middle East as a correspondent. Her novel *Quand le soleil était chaud* (When the Sun was Hot) is built along the most traditional of lines. In 1989 Lola, the central character, revisits her native land and the story begins: the flow of memory along the usual tracks of youth and on to adulthood and middle age.

The novel's value lies in the society it depicts — mostly the Syro-Lebanese "upper-class": they are tolerant, funny, and enjoy attending balls and going to clubs, the women all for Paris fashion and the young tuned in to Hollywood stars. Some of the characters and families (Yvette Farazi, the Boulebs) bear their real names (you can still meet two or three of them in downtown Cairo). Their presence gives the novel the feel of an old 'Mo-vietone' newsreel: they move, they act, they disappear from the screen and you forget all about them. They don't read, or at least we don't see them read anything but fashion magazines; they don't practise any form of art; they have violent emotions but no deep feelings for others, at least not for those outside their circle.

Meanwhile, in the background, Cairo is burning and the revolution brewing — slight impediments on the path of pleasure, but never for more than a day, thank God. Typical of this state of mind is the impressive depiction of the events of 26 January, 1952. Banks, cinemas and nightclubs are attacked and burnt. The Shepherd Hotel

— at the time the favourite resort of Opera singers, theatrical groups and international figures — goes up in flames together with its invaluable treasures. At the Turf Club, several English men are killed. One or two blocks away, people are shopping or planning their evening invitations or buying tickets for the latest film — unaware of what is happening. It is quite a vivid report, marred only by the mix up in topographical details, names of streets and places (you really cannot see both Gruppi and Cinema Metro at the same time if you are standing in Sherif Street).

Four years later we follow Lola and her new husband, a cousin, to Beirut — "a mad, mad world" of money, luxury and ostentation. Mercifully, family is very important. It takes the young couple to its bosom and helps them build a new life. So, when Lola is asked to take on the family chronicle of the Boulebs, she has to accept — a bit reluctantly at first, then with enthusiasm. The chronicle was first started in 1882 by Father Antoine Boulard in the convent of Kaslik. The family history goes back to the conversion of a certain Foulaz to Christianity in Damascus in 43

AD. It traces the stories of his successors who worked as iron-mongers, their strategies to survive invasions and persecution, all the way to the 19th and 20th centuries with the dispersion of their offspring to the four corners of the earth.

The 1967 defeat and the Palestinian Problem have little impact on a society out to enjoy the fleshpots. So much so that they find themselves in the middle of a cruel civil war they did not even know had begun. They react as individuals, clans or families, but never as one nation. Unbelievable ruthlessness, revenge and fear become the norm everywhere. Stranger still is the way the members of the society depicted by Alia use

time between attacks to rebuild whatever has collapsed in a few hours. To escape to Paris, none too kind to exiles, or to go back and try again: it goes on for years and years. In this third part, Alia really comes into her own. As a reporter, she is able to turn her book into an almost day-to-day chronicle of military actions and, better still, of the holy or unholy alliances between the perpetually changing factions and parties. Until Lola waltzes literally into madness and death.

Reading these two books one cannot help but ask oneself: could it be that no community, however powerful, can refuse integration into the culture surrounding it and survive? The communities described loved life, wanted to enjoy it to the full. Sometimes they made the wrong choices, were blinded by their selfishness. But then they initiated projects, played a decisive role in economy and finance. So, the question is: why did they have to leave the land they loved?

Reviewed by Mona Refaat

No town like Alex

Tales from Alexandria, Jacqueline Cooper. Geneva: BTL, 1994, 145 pp

For those who have not read Jacqueline Cooper's earlier novel, *Cocktails and Camels* (1960), *Tales from Alexandria* makes delightful reading. Born in Alexandria of Lebanese parents, Ms Cooper left in the 1940s and returns, in this her second book on Alexandria, to the scenes of her childhood and youth. You don't have to be an Alexandrian to appreciate the social history which she presents in the form of anecdotes and auto-biographical recollections — with some embellishments that have crept in with time, as she tells us.

Set in the inter-war period and the early years of World War II, *Tales from Alexandria* draws a vivid portrait of Alexandria in its golden age, when it was more than, as the author describes it, "a nice friendly little town basking in the sunshine and the cool Mediterranean breeze". During the 1930s Alexandria was a melting pot of people from all over the Mediterranean and beyond, which lent it a unique cosmopolitan character and brought it prosperity. If, as Ms Cooper obviously did, one came from a wealthy family, one found that "nothing was impossible, especially if it involved one's comfort". The book abounds with the endless dinner parties, *suffragis*, English governesses, chauffeurs and nannies that formed the backdrop of the lives of Alexandria's wealthy. Throughout, the writer's wit and sense of humour poke gentle fun at the life of leisure led by her family and friends.

"The grocers were Greek, the jewellers were Jewish, the shoemakers were Armenian, and the Lebanese were everywhere. They lived in little villas of twelve bedrooms, threw intimate dinner parties for sixty, and talked so softly that they could be heard on Mars".

As we follow the career of Ms Cooper from childhood to the last stages of teenage, passing by nannies, governesses and schools, and going away with her on summer vacations to Europe and the Lebanon, we get a strong feel for the place and the people who inhabited it, but we also move beyond the superficiality of the socialites' existence. In between all those cocktails and canapés, we witness the establishment in 1935 of the first English school for girls (the EGC), the arrival of American soldiers during the war, and the rigidity of social conventions despite the free flow of alcohol.

There is also a strong moral lesson contained in this volume. Although Ms Cooper categorises the population — according to the language of her times — as Arabs (that is, Egyptians), Lebanese, Syrians, Greeks, Armenians, Italians, French, English, Jews, and so on, the boundaries be-

tween such seemingly fixed categorisations are constantly blurred within the narrative.

"Religious processions blocked the narrow streets at Christmas and Easter, and to celebrate St Anthony's anniversary in June... The faithful overflowed mosques each Friday, praying in the middle of the street, and the *muezzin's* voice could be heard blocks away. I attended Jewish weddings at the large synagogue on Rue Nehi Daniel, and Muslim children went to Christian schools". Such a fusion of cultures, as the author rightly tells us, enriched the lives of Alexandrians. It is salutary to be reminded that tolerance is as much a product of difference as aggression.

Modern Alexandrians will be gratified to recall, through the pages of the book, the city long vanished, to revisit places like the Mayfair Inn and the Beau Rivage pulled down years ago, to recapture the spirit of times gone by, when driving along the corniche was a pleasure and riding the tram was a treat, when Ramleh was dotted with villas buried in verdant gardens, and when people maintained stringent standards of order and cleanliness.

Because for Ms Cooper Alexandria is "a city of memories and nostalgia", not a "city of the imagination" as it was for the Irish poet Desmond O'Grady and other more renowned writers who immortalised Alexandria in their literary works, she describes it with a freshness, honesty and fidelity to its spirit that make *Tales from Alexandria*, if not a profound work of art, definitely a light and witty, truthful and extremely readable social document. The reader who is familiar with *Cocktails and Camels*, however, will find that huge chunks — and even a whole chapter — have been lifted out of it and repeated verbatim in *Tales from Alexandria*.

What particularly distinguishes the later book from its predecessor is the concluding chapter in which Ms Cooper recounts her visit to Alexandria in the early 1990s. Coming from lifeless yet stressful Geneva, Ms Cooper returns to Alexandria to recharge her batteries, where the bustle and leisurely pace act as stimulus and soothing agent. But Alexandrians will not find her portrait of modern Alexandria a faithful one. She describes the city in the tones of a visitor fascinated by the ethnic strangeness of this unique city, though her tone is never patronising or condescending, and the human touch and unconditional love for her home town are never far from the narrative. Yet having made the mistake of pointing out to her friends that Alexandria had become dilapidated and full of

trash, she realises that she "had unintentionally been hurtful". They had accepted the good with the bad. Consequently, she will not repeat the mistake in print. She will not but the feelings of those Alexandrians who refused to expatriate and who chose to live through the ravages time wrought on their city. She will only accentuate the vigour and liveliness of the Arab city and the fun and friendship the cosmopolitans were sharing. The rest does not exist.

What the author has tried to do in this volume is show that despite the passage of time and the inevitable changes that follow in its wake, the essential spirit of Alexandria remains intact. A sense of continuity persists, and regardless of Arabisation, the cosmopolitan nature of the city endures and is perpetuated in the younger generations. Yet Ms Cooper deliberately avoids the issue that the cosmopolitan society she meets with in the 1990s is less than a fraction of the population and that they exist only in small pockets in the city. They themselves realise that they are on their way to extinction and some of them even refer to themselves as "dinosaurs". The predominantly "Egyptian" people look on them with amusement as the last of a race which is still clinging desperately to standards and values of bygone days when the world was beautiful and there really was no place on earth like Alexandria, a race that can no longer survive in a city which is today hiding its face under mountains of garbage and forests of ugly concrete buildings.

Reviewed by

Sahar Hamouda

The pageant continues

Mawlid Misr El-Mahroussa (Moulids of Egypt the God-Protected), Arafat Abdou Ali. Cairo: Dar Ein Lil-Nashr, 1996

Religious celebrations in Egypt have their own cultural specificity, perpetuating as they do rituals many millennia old. In his *Moulids of Egypt the God-Protected*, Arafat Abdou gives the reader a kaleidoscopic view of the archetypal world of mystics, saints and dervishes preserved in the popular imagination. In each of Egypt's villages, estimated to be about 6000, there is at least one shrine to a holy saint whose *moulid* is celebrated by the inhabitants of the area. This in addition to the *moulids* of the household of the Prophet, El-Sayeda Zeinab, El-Sayeda Nafessa, Sayedna El-Husseini, as well as prominent sheikhs such as El-Imam El-Shafie, El-Imam El-Leith, El-Morsi Abul-Abbas and El-Sayed El-Badawi among others. There are also Coptic *moulids* which amount to about 62 and are observed by both Muslims and Copts (in the same way that Copts revere Muslim saints). The book examines this world of popular, religious heritage in Egypt through three themes, "The Prophet's Moulid in the Collective Memory", "Sufism" and "The World of the Saints". There are ample historical descriptions

of the celebrations of the Prophet's *moulid*, dating back to the Fatimids when the Caliph attended the festivities in person. El-Mawlid provides a vivid tableau of the lavish banquets prepared for the occasion and the highly ritualised processions. In the Ayyubid period such extravagant ceremonies surrounding the Prophet's *moulid* were toned down as part of the large-scale campaign to obliterate the mores of the preceding Fatimid era.

The Mamluke period, on the other hand, saw a reinstatement of such festivals and the revival of all their sumptuous rituals — as seen in the account of Sultan Barquq's munificence that has come to us from chronicler El-Sakhawi. Another account, this time by Ibn Iyass, of Sultan Qait Bey's celebration of the *moulid* is no less rhapsodic. Ibn Iyass, describing the tent erected for the descendants of the Prophet, says it required 300 men to pitch it and that the celebration continued from the afternoon prayers to the dawn of the following day, punctuated with banquets, song and *zikr* (the rhythmic repetition of formulaic religious phrases).

Such joyous celebrations withered during the Ottoman era. Indeed, Ibn Iyass, who spanned both the Mamluke and Ottoman eras, laments the drab straitened celebrations held by the Ottomans. The Prophet's *moulid*, however, was to be revived with the French occupation of Egypt, as part of Napoleon's attempt to win over the populace by courting their religious sentiments. It is known that Napoleon kept a high profile in the *moulid*. From historian El-Gabarti, we learn that the French contributed to the celebrations with fireworks and cannon fire.

A few decades later, English Orientalist Edward Lane, who expresses his surprise at the participation of Copts in the celebrations, described the Prophet's *moulid* held in 1834. Indeed, Lane's account is invaluable in that he was the last to describe the *dosh* parade, which was to disappear forever a few years later.

"The sheikh [of the Saadeya dervishes]... is an old, gray-bearded man, of an intelligent and amiable countenance, and fair complexion... The horse upon which he rode was one of moderate height

and weight; my reason for mentioning this will presently be seen. The sheikh entered the Birket El-Ezbekieh preceded by a very numerous procession of the daraweshes, of whom he is the chief. In the way through this place, the procession stopped at a short distance before the house of the Sheikh El-Bekree. Here, a considerable number of the daraweshes and others... laid themselves down upon the ground, side by side, as close as possible to each other, having their backs up, their legs extended, and their arms placed together beneath their foreheads... About twelve or more daraweshes, most without their shoes, then ran over the backs of their prostrate companions, some exclaiming Allah! and then the sheikh approached. His horse hesitated for several minutes to tread upon the back of the first of the prostrate men; but being pulled, and urged on behind, he at length stepped upon him; and then, without apparent fear, ambled, with a high pace, over them all... The spectators immediately raised a long cry of 'Allah la la la la!'

We have an abundance of eyewitness ac-

counts of the festival during the Mohamed Ali dynasty — serpent- and glass-eating dervishes featuring prominently. In the reigns of Fouad and Farouq, the scope of the celebrations narrowed, though the festive mood surrounding them persisted.

After giving a historical account of celebrations of the Prophet's *moulid*, the author of *Mawlid Misr* then tackles another facet of the world of popular heritage — Sufism. Sufi sects started towards the beginning of the 12th century AD. Those of them that had their beginnings in Egypt include the Ahmadiya, the Burhanis and the Shazliya sects. Each of these sects functions in accordance with strict, albeit unwritten, rules and statutes and each has a sheikh and servants of the shrine. The *moulids* of Sufi saints are celebrated by hordes of Egyptians hailing from various parts of the country. The *moulid* of El-Sayed El-Badawi, for example, draws about one million Egyptians, while that of Ibrahima El-Desouqi is attended by one and a half million.

The state intervened in 1905 in the internal organisation of the sects and the coordination between them, issuing the fa-

mous charter that remains in place to this day. This charter is meant to regulate the meetings of the various sects' sheikhs, their lectures and procedures and the maintenance of the shrines.

The celebrations of the great Sufis' *moulids* call to mind those celebrations that the peasants of Egypt held for their gods. The pageantry surrounding the *moulids* is formidable — banners in the many colours of the different sects, thousands who have hailed from all over the country for the duration of the celebration, banquets open to any passerby. Among Muslim sects, Egyptians are singular in their belief in intercession. To this day, they continue to drop letters in a special box in the mosques of El-Sayeda Zeinab and El-Imam El-Shafie. The letters can be a demand for the alleviation of injustice or illness or for a wish to be fulfilled. It is almost as though El-Sayeda Zeinab in the eyes of the people is a substitute for the worldly state courts that, they feel, will not do them justice.

Reviewed by

Mahmoud El-Wardani

Plain Talk

I have just received the twentieth issue of the British Council literature department's newsletter. Newsletter is a modest term for this useful publication which should be judged by its contents.

This issue covers various topics reflecting the literary scene in Britain. One topic that particularly arrested my attention was the tribute to four literary figures who died recently, including Nigerian writer Ken Saro Wiwa. Chris Joslin, English language officer, in Mexico, recalls his friendship with Wiwa while working in Nigeria between 1989 and 1992. Martin Banham of Leeds University and Harriet Harvey Wood join in these tributes.

Ken Saro Wiwa, a leading playwright, fought against the Nigerian military government. He wrote *Four Farical Plays* and *Basi and Company* for television. Of Wiwa's most popular work Professor Banham writes that "the farcical and satirical exploits of Basi and his friends became cult viewing in Nigeria, running to almost a hundred episodes. Wiwa's outspoken opinions did little to endear him to those in power. His outspokenness led to his arrest and execution."

Other writers remembered in this issue of the British Council literature department's newsletter are Kingsley Amis, Gavin Ewart, and Stephen Spender. Stuart Hampshire, a close friend of the poet writes about first meeting Spender in 1935. The poet's "extraordinary goodness of manner and of feeling," describes Hampshire, "was in strong contrast with the marks of modernity in those pre-war years... Stephen preserved a strong and utterly reliable sense of the absurd ever since I first met him, up until our last hunches together."

Following these remembrances comes Valentine Cunningham's article "Fiction 90's". The writer claims that "imaginative force has not died in the British (and Irish and Commonwealth) novel, though the penchant of Booker Prize juries for giving the country's most prestigious fiction award to rather dull candidates may suggest it had". He then analyses the short listed novels of Martin Amis, Salman Rushdie and others. They all lost to Pat Barker's *The Ghost Road*, the third part of a trilogy about the Great War.

In addition to those of the Booker Prize, the newsletter also gives the results of the £10,000 Forward Poetry Prize, which has been awarded to Irish poet Sean O'Brien, while the £5,000 Best First Collection went to Jane Duran, a previous member of the British Council staff. Other awards are the McVitie's Prize for the Scottish Writer of the Year and the Whitbread Fiction Award.

A selection of new titles is given, followed by John Mepham's fascinating article "What is England?" Mepham explains the influence of books on the formation of one's idea of what England is. Images of England range from those provided by Arthur Conan Doyle to others given by George Orwell, Charles Darwin, E. M. Forster, Virginia Woolf, D. H. Lawrence and so forth. Mepham concludes that "there have been many versions (of England) which have been culturally important."

What is England now? asks the writer. "It is something to be imagined," he responds, "and created rather than remembered and preserved... inclusive and culturally multiple rather than a quintessence... Perhaps in the future it just won't matter to people so much what England is because it will be so many different but equally valued things."

"His horse hesitated for several minutes to tread upon the back of the first of the prostrate men; but being pulled, and urged on behind, he at length stepped upon him; and then, without apparent fear, ambled, with a high pace, over them all... Left: an engraving of the *dosh* parade, reproduced from Lane's *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*



The quality of life

Unlike previous UN mega-conferences, Habitat II convened in Istanbul on 3 June in a rather subdued atmosphere, overshadowed by world events of greater immediacy and overwhelmed by the task ahead. By the beginning of the next century, 50 per cent of the global population will be living in cities ill-equipped to receive massive influxes of new settlers. Coping with the changes in the urban configuration, altering existing infrastructures, building new ones, planning new cities, providing the poor with decent shelter and clean water, devising new strategies to limit pollution and waste, are just a few of the items on the conference's agenda. The delegates to the last UN conference of the century are facing a bitter truth: there is so little that has been achieved and so much remains promises on paper. Will Habitat II come up, for its swan song, with concrete solutions?



Photo: Sherif Sanbol



A problem of communication

Going down Qasr El-Nil Street not long ago, I was stopped by a handsome young foreigner. "Don't you remember me?" he asked. "No," I said firmly, trying to walk past him. "But you must," said the stranger with a broad smile; "you taught my brother and I English. Don't you remember? I am Bo, the younger one."

Something clicked in my memory, probably triggered by the unusual name. Bo had come from Holland one summer in the late '70s. He and his brother needed to learn English in a hurry to pass the American school's entrance examination. Otherwise, they would have had to go to boarding school in Holland, an idea which did not appeal to either of the boys. I had done my very best and both had been accepted. I now remembered them bringing me a huge bunch of flowers to tell me the good news. Bo must have been 12 at the time.

"And what are you doing now?" I asked. Bo had loved Egypt so much that he often spent his holidays in Cairo after moving back to Holland, he explained. He was teaching English at a Dutch school, was married and had two children. They too were learning English, Bo said, and, according to him it was all because of me. I had encouraged him in those days with the desire to learn and teach others.

I particularly cherish the memory of this encounter because young Bo must be the only creature around who has been able to benefit from anything I taught. My students were in the habit of regressing steadily, my children only learned from their peers and my pets invariably developed an attitude problem which manifested itself in their absolute lack of cooperation in the simplest training process.

These days, I have put my teaching skills — or absence thereof — to rest. I no longer attempt to impart knowledge of any kind. I have even abandoned the rigorous effort I formerly made to ensure that a clear explanation accompanied each of my orders and requests. Despite this policy, too often, I recall, I have employed cleaning ladies who pathetically bungled up their job for lack of clear instructions on my part. When one of us fed up with the constant misunderstandings, we usually amicably decide to go our separate ways and I hire someone new. I often blush secretly at the notion of being cited as a reference by those who left.

"Why can't you tell them what you want in a simple sentence," asks my mother after every episode. "They won't learn," I always reply. The truth is that they would, if only I knew how to instruct them in short clear utterances. Instead I ramble on about the general advantages of cleanliness, the replacement value of various items, and pets' physiological need for steady access to drinking water. When I come home at night, I sweep the dust back out from under the carpet, make a note to buy new mugs (stainless steel maybe?) and fill my thirsty cats' bowls with fresh water. I think that there should be a better way, but the next day, I am back explaining that certain garments react adversely to hot water, instead of simply saying "wash the shirt in cold water, please."

My maid-of-the-moment is a lovely girl. She is young and alert and energetic. She retrieves my glasses from the refrigerator and my purse out of the pile of dirty linen without so much as an ironic smile. She knows how to answer the phone and is quite clever at screening my calls. Her shortcomings are few and far between. I find them annoying nevertheless. She rearranges the furniture and floods the indoor plants which she then places in the hot sun to dry. She tempests with my books and papers, a crime that I consider capital. I gave her several long lectures on the basic rules of interior decoration, the care of hot-house plants and the characteristics of journalistic work — all to no avail.

Why am I unable to simply tell her what I want, my bewildered friends wonder. As a child, I was always told what to do in no uncertain terms. I took orders with never a chance to exercise my own judgment. As an adult, I decided somewhere along the line that people should be inspired to choose the right path not coerced into it. I provide the information, the other party decides on a course of action accordingly. I am still waiting for this method to bear fruit.

With Karima, our maid, as with her predecessors, I have met with total failure so far. The other day, she brought me a steaming cup of coffee, for which I was very grateful. She looked like she was about to place it on my bedside table and ruin the antique wood. "Karima, my dear," I said gently, "you know that we have coasters to place under hot cups. Now wouldn't it be nicer if you used one to protect the wood of this bedside table, which I inherited from my grandmother?" It took her some time to decipher the message, all the while holding the hot mug in mid-air. Finally, her face lit up. "I am sorry," she said, "I'll get one at once. Whereupon she placed the mug on the polished wood, spilling a few drops of coffee in her eagerness and ran for the coaster."

Fayza Hassan

Sewage siege

Ard El-Nawarah, near Maadi, is one of Greater Cairo's several unplanned, haphazardly-built slum areas. Like many such areas, it lacks sewage and fresh water services, and consequently suffers from groundwater flooding. In addition to the serious health problems caused by the residents are forced to live with no sewage facilities. As part of a LE2.5 billion project, Ard El-Nawarah is currently being connected to Cairo's main sewage system, and there are plans to extend the service to other, similar, areas.

According to Cairo Governor Omar Abdel-Akher, a sewage system is only the first step towards improving living conditions in areas like Ard El-Nawarah. "Lack of sewage facilities is the big disaster. Once we have that in place, then water and electricity and construction can follow," he said.

However, residents of the area were sceptical of government promises. On a visit to inspect the site, Abdel-Akher was met with huge banners hung from balconies calling for the immediate introduction of sewage and fresh water services. One angry resident slammed the government for doing too little, too late for the inhabitants, whose homes and streets, he said, had almost drowned under the high water levels, which had caused serious sanitation problems.

According to Talaat Abu Salda, head of the General Organisation for the Execution of the Greater Cairo Wastewater Project (CWO), the Ard El-Nawarah project will take three or four months to complete. "It is a desperately needed project," he said. "Much of the area was submerged under water because it is so low ground, and this is in addition to the overflowing of waste water and sewage into the streets." He added that the region surrounding Ard El-Nawarah, an area of high population density and low incomes, is also severely polluted by sewage. However pipelines would not be laid there for a year, and the project would take two years to complete.

For residents living in such areas, the lack of proper sewerage and fresh water facilities has made life almost unendurable. The absence of modern sewerage systems has led to the use of primitive sewage disposal mechanisms. These, together with seepage from faulty pipelines laid

by the residents, has led to the flooding of streets and homes.

According to Mohamed El-Said Youssef, director of the General Organisation for Sewage Disposal (GOSD) there are 117 such areas in Greater Cairo in need of proper sewage disposal services. The problem, he said, began because homes were built in the area without obtaining the necessary legal license. "People went to these areas, settled down with their families and there is nothing we can do about it. So now we are obliged to provide a network of waste water services for them."

"When they first settled there, they set up their own sewerage systems. But these were not properly planned or constructed, which led to flooding, leakage and other grave sanitary and pollution problems."

However, problems of sewage disposal are not confined to the unplanned districts. Even where facilities exist, they are inefficient. Cairo's overloaded and inefficient sewerage system, and the health, groundwater and flooding problems it causes, has long been a pressing concern. In 1984, the Cairo Governorate endorsed a multi-million pound project divided into three five-year phases and which was to be completed before the year 2000. The project received extensive funding from foreign donors who were responsible for many of Cairo's huge sewerage construction ventures.

But why has it taken so long for some projects, like the construction to get off the ground? "Shortage of funding," replied Abu Salda. "Once we have the funding, many of our projects can go ahead. The British and Americans have expressed interest in some of our future projects but no contracts have yet been signed," Abu Salda said.

The future funding of projects for Greater Cairo's enormous sewerage network has long been a bone of contention between the Egyptian authorities and foreign donors, who have poured huge sums of money into Cairo's Sewerage I, II and III projects, a separate scheme which has been in operation since 1978. From 1978 to 1984, AMBRIC, an international consortium consisting of two British and two American firms, put \$129 million into the ren-

ovation and repair of Cairo's collapsing sewerage system, to the first phase of the project, called Cairo Sewerage I. Cairo Sewerage II followed in 1984 with a \$816 million budget for the construction of a new sewerage system in Cairo's west bank areas. The 14-year project also encompassed waste treatment capacities for the west bank, which is expected to double its population to 3.6 million by the year 2000.

In collaboration with the Egyptian authorities, the US firms, working under the auspices of USAID, have almost completed their work in the west bank, due for completion in 1998. Last week, USAID managed to complete the sewerage system for Imbaba, but there are three remaining projects with \$40 million-worth of work still to be completed.

Whether foreign donors are prepared to fund the next planned stage, Cairo III, rests on the Egyptian authorities' ability to resolve the conflict over the establishment of the new phase as a Fixed Amount Reimbursable Programme (FAR).

Cairo II, which financed sewers and house connections to unserved areas of Imbaba, Zenzin and Al-Haram district, was originally established as a FAR. However, according to a US AID official, there have been problems over its implementation, and the Egyptian authorities are hesitant over beginning another project on the same basis.

The basic concept of a FAR, the official explained, was to charge consumers a small sum for their sewerage services, to enable some of the project's costs to be recouped. Part of the purpose of the system was to enable the GOSD to undergo the institutional reforms required as part of the Cairo II deal. "We want the GOSD to become an independent utility and recover the costs of the operation and maintenance of the sewerage programme in Greater Cairo," said the USAID official. "We want people to receive bills for their sewerage services. This is not new. In the United States, people pay for their sewerage removal along with the water and electricity bills. The fee would be small, but the money would go towards the GOSD's costs."

A presidential decree signed in March 1994 permitted changes within the GOSD, allowing it

to become an autonomous organisation over the next four years. However, such a transformation has been slow because the Egyptian authorities are reluctant to bill the consumer. "The main problem is that it is difficult to raise prices in Cairo. What we find is that the other governments have an easier time raising their fees and they are ahead on their projects. Alexandria had difficulties but they are raising the fees and I believe they are way ahead of Cairo in covering maintenance costs," said the USAID official.

Foreign donors have pledged \$16 million in institutional support in a 1996 contract which seeks to help the GOSD towards independence by providing employee training and facilities maintenance and management. "I think there has been a problem with the politics of the matter. The donors have done so much construction and they want institutional policy reform. When that is in place they will do more construction work," continued the official.

The official dismissed the argument that a sewage billing system would penalise the poor: "In Imbaba, if you ask residents what they were paying five years ago, they would tell you they were paying far more. They were paying enormous amounts because they had to buy drinking water by the jerkin and had to discharge their sewage into a cesspit, which cost LE20 to have pumped. So getting hooked up drops the cost for the poor."

Protests, he believes, are far more likely to come from households which have had sewage facilities and water for a long time, and are suddenly expected to pay.

GOSD director Youssef told the *Weekly* that negotiations were underway over the planned institutional reform, but agreed that the billing system was a sticking point. Currently, 20 per cent of the money from water bills goes to the GOSD, but the organisation is reluctant to charge more. "As a political decision, we do not want to burden the Egyptian citizen more... This is the main impediment to the acceptance of the foreign donors' conditions."

However, despite funding problems, work on sewerage systems was still going ahead, funded by the Egyptian government, in the form of the LE2.5 billion project for areas like Ard El-Nawarah.

Sufra Dayma

Jordanian Msakhan

Ingredients:
3 chicken 1 kg each
3 large leaves of *baladi* bread
1/2 cup of corn oil
8 onions finely chopped
3/4 cup of *sama*
Salt + pepper + cinnamon + allspice + outmeg (ground)

Method:
Wash and clean the chicken, then cut them longitudinally in halves. Rub each half with the mixture of salt, pepper, cinnamon, allspice and nutmeg very well inside out. Add the *sama* to the onions plus some salt and stir mixing them together. Cut the leaves into two circles, separating the upper half from the lower one. Put one tablespoonful of the onion and *sama* mixture in the middle of the leaf then place one half of a chicken towards the edge of the bread, add another tablespoonful of the same mixture on top of it, then fold the bread placing the chicken half within it. Place it in a baking pan and repeat the procedure until you are through with the chicken and bread. Some liquid residue will remain from the onion and *sama* mixture, so smear the top of the leaves with it and bake in preheated hot oven for about one hour. When the top of the leaves become golden and crispy, sprinkle some water on top of them, then cover the pan with a sheet of aluminium foil, lower the heat to medium and continue baking until no liquid remains. Serve with *babaghanouj* salad and an assortment of fresh green vegetables.

Moushira Abdel-Malek

Restaurant review

Alternatives to cuckoo clocks

Nigel Ryan on a well-judged balancing act

Pity poor old Harry Lyme, who met his unfortunate end before ever having visited a Swiss restaurant. Surely if he had he would have included them alongside cuckoo clocks as one of the great Swiss inventions. For what could be more cantonic than these spruce interiors with pine framed prints, heart fretted chairs, efficient service and salad bars. Ah, the salad bar, which brings me to the point of this review.

Summertime, and the living isn't all that easy. Crossing the street is hard enough already without the tarmac being squidgy than the Princess of Wales. Just the thought of walking to a restaurant in the blazing sun is enough to make the hardest lose their appetite. And what do you eat when you arrive, glowing or sweaty according to gender?

Well one possibility of filling that mid-day lacuna is to go to La Chesa, midtown branch of Swissair's Cairo operation. The air conditioning runs as smoothly as a Swiss watch. The waiters pad around silently, as if wearing carpet slippers, their smiles Swiss trained.

Do not be tempted by the cow bells decorating the wall to let your thoughts stray to animal protein. Resist that particular tinkle, remembering always that though you are now cool at some point you will have to leave. This is lunch time and outside it is hot, hardly the weather for veal in a heavy cream sauce. Head instead for the salad bar.

You pay according to the size of your plate, and to make things easier for the customer there are two sizes, large and

small. I have seen small plates heaped as high as an alpine peak, large plates delicately arranged with a few leaves of lettuce and slithers of ground carrot. It all depends on your appetite and balancing skills since at La Chesa you help yourself. But remember you must make your way back to your table. La Chesa is seldom empty, and should considerations of economy have tempted you to pile on a small plate quantities that would fit more comfortably on the larger, there is always the danger that that final tomato might begin a precipitous decent, sliding over pasta and tuna, ricocheting off the cucumber and the strips of cold cuts, its journey lubricated by one of three dressings, Italian, French or Roquefort, to end on the carpet, thus exposing both greed and parsimony in one fell swoop.

Ingredients change daily, though they do not stray far from La Chesa. But the constants are the things that count. The restaurant is clean, cool, uncluttered. It may be a little twee, but this is Switzerland after all. And on some days, particularly sticky summer days, the sound of cow bells in an alpine meadow can have an overwhelming appeal.

Nor will you need a numbered Swiss bank account. Two large salads, lemon juices, followed by excellent espresso, brought the bill to LE37.

There is no point sneering at a Swissair salad. Had Orson Welles discovered them things might have turned out differently both for him and Harry Lyme.

La Chesa, 21 Adly Street. Tel 39 39 360

Al-Ahram Weekly

Crossword

By Samia Abdennour

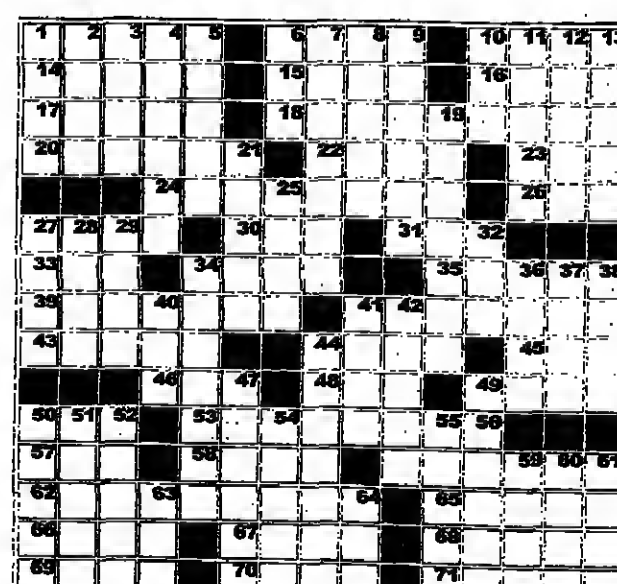
ACROSS

1. Organic substance exuded from fir or pine trees (5)
6. Holiday; festive (4)
10. ... monster = poisonous lizard (4)
14. Friend, Sp. (5)
15. Bull ring cheers (4)
16. An ex-British Prime Minister (4)
17. Musical instrument (4)
18. Degradation (9)
20. The stoat's winter coat (6)
22. Employ (4)
23. Consumed (3)
24. Habituation (8)
26. May day (3)
27. Bad mannered (4)
30. Part of verb to be (3)
31. Large cask for wine (3)
33. Australian bird (3)
34. Sacred picture (4)
35. The great artery (5)
39. Playwright (7)
41. Hurdle; barricade (7)
43. Papered (5)

DOWN

1. Take by force (4)
2. Arab prince (4)
3. Thailand formerly (4)
4. Kindle (6)
5. Not any single person, 2 wds. (5)
6. Black-tailed gazelle of Tibet (3)
7. Endosperm (7)
8. Occupy temporarily (5)
9. Concede; be of one mind (6)
10. Bijou (3)
11. Conceptions (5)
12. Slow in music (5)
13. Poker stakes (5)

Last week's solution



19. Inlet (7)
21. Legislate (5)
25. Greek Cupid (4)
27. Peruse (4)
28. Boss of shield (4)
29. Powdery dirt (4)
32. Neither's partner (3)
34. Guiding principles (7)
36. Mount (4)
37. Be prolific (4)
38. God of War (4)
40. Even, poetic (3)
41. Describing unsweetened wine (4)
42. Membranes enclosing unborn babes (6)
44. Public allowance to the prince of a reigning house; territorial dependency (7)
47. Fatty constituent of milk (6)
49. Anchorite (6)
50. Cuts down (5)
51. Greyish-white (5)
52. ... is a crowd (5)
54. Lover's (5)
55. Small containers for holding liquid medicines (5)
59. Rodolfo's love in Puccini's 'La Boheme' (4)
60. The indigo plant (4)
61. Jet down; memorandum (4)
63. Suffix used to form feminine words (3)
64. Weather directions (3)

Not in my backyard

Despite an international ban, toxic waste traders are thriving underground. Amira Ibrahim tracks down the waste mafia and dodgers of environmental regulations

Years have passed since Cito's poisonous shipments arrived. The majority of the population has little or no knowledge of such incidents. But these activities are evidence of an underground toxic waste trade which, despite local and international opposition, is still thriving.

Earlier this year, minister of state for administrative development and environment affairs, Atif Ebeid, announced the defeat of 15 illegal attempts to export toxic waste to Egypt in 1994 and 1995. Few details were released about each incident, but Ebeid told participants at a conference on the environment, organised by the Centre for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe (CEDARE) at the end of 1995, "The international waste mafia has been trying hard for the last three years to put Egypt on its vicious map of toxic waste trade."

Ebeid announced that in accordance with the Egyptian Environment Law of 1994, several ships were seized during 1994-5 and later expelled from Egypt. Those held responsible for the shipments were arrested and charged with illegally exporting toxic wastes.

Ebeid also revealed that an international company had offered \$40 per ton for a shipment which included 10,000 tons of plastic waste, supposedly intended for use as fuel. The attempt was thwarted just before the ship reached Egyptian shores.

With so few details available, the public must rely on official reports about toxic waste trade in Egypt. Salah Hafez, director of the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA), claims that Egypt is free of toxic wastes. "I do not think that wastes of any sort have recently infiltrated the country," he stated. The EEAA is the body responsible for supervising and observing the import of toxic and nuclear shipments as well as those produced locally.

Dumping a ton of toxic waste in Africa costs \$40 dollars, 14-36 times less than what it costs to dump in the US and Europe. In December 1992, the international community decided that action must be taken to prevent the export of toxic wastes from developed countries to developing countries. Those concerned with this problem signed the Basel Convention which called for the prohibition of the transfer of hazardous waste destined for final disposal from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member countries to non-OECD countries.

Hafez noted, however, that the Basel Convention has not succeeded in wiping out the toxic waste trade. He stated that the agreement is weak due to a clause which still permits using and recycling waste for business purposes.

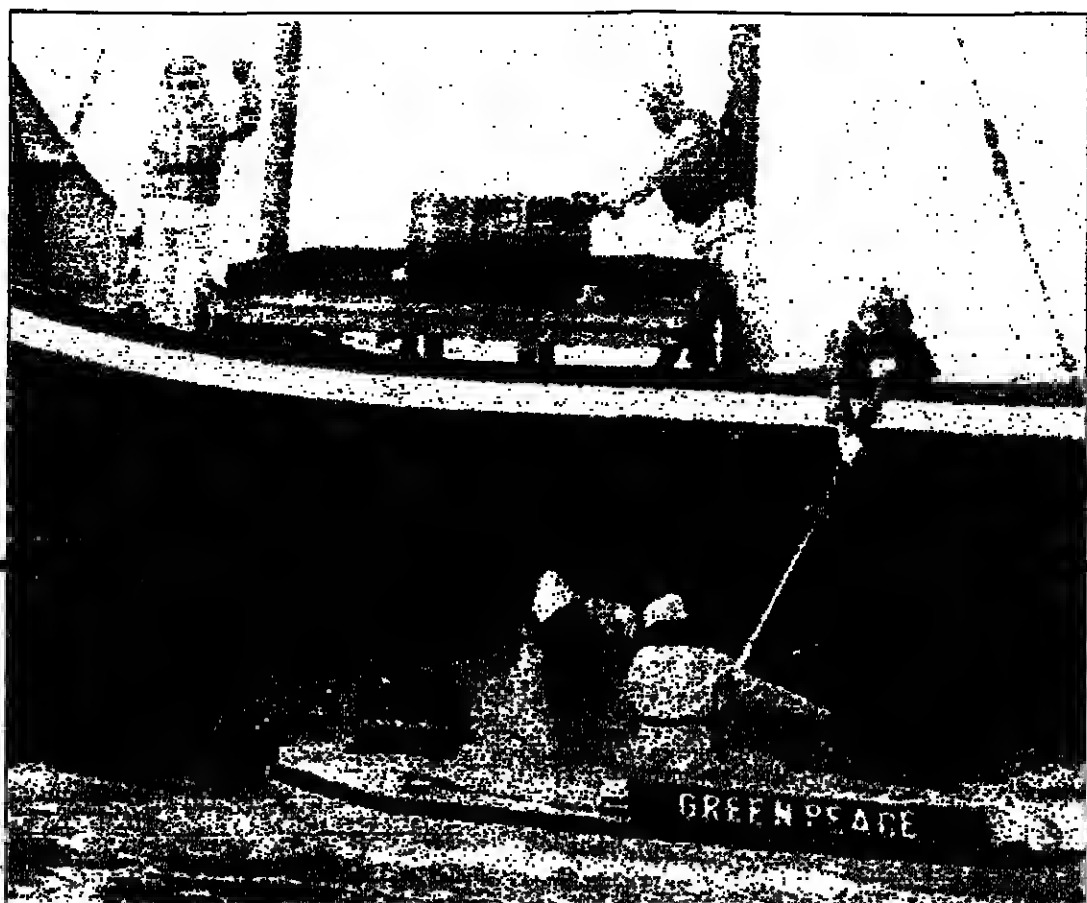
"This type of business is not development; it is a crime against humanity and

the environment," protested Tebogo Phadu of the Environmental Justice Networking Forum (EJNF) of South Africa.

Toxic waste is sometimes recycled for use as fertiliser, pesticide or raw material to produce paints for furniture and polyurethane for the production of foam mattresses. But, some factories, unhappy with the quality of these raw materials, throw them into city dumps. In some cases, the barrels of wastes are emptied and sold as storage containers for petrol, water and sometimes food.

"Non-governmental bodies have proven to be very efficient in taking action against the waste trade," Hafez pointed out. "Thanks to their great efforts, we have been able to protect our lands against waste pollution."

Other concerned authorities highlighted safety procedures intended to prevent chemical and nuclear waste transfer. According to Ahmed Al-Qadi, director of the Centre for Nuclear Safety (CNS), ships with nuclear loads are required to obtain several certificates in order to enter Egyptian ports. Shipments are thoroughly checked to ensure they do not exceed the permitted radioactive level, said Al-Qadi.



Confronting power and money... Greenpeace in action (photo: AP)

"The packing for toxic shipments should fulfill the requirements of the UN International Maritime Organisation (IMO). The ship should have a certificate proving it is designed and built to carry such dangerous commodities," Al-Qadi explained.

Hafez insisted that EEAA has built up a successful early detection mechanism including contacts with Egyptian embassies, environment groups abroad and governments of non-OECD countries. And officials at the Suez Canal are taking preventative measures to keep the channel clear of nuclear and chemical pollution.

But Mohamed El-Ghamry, director of the Suez Canal Authority's Research Institute, warned that adopting additional complicated procedures against special

shipments would threaten the future of the channel as a vital water passage. "We are a commercial company. We need to attract new customers rather than lose current clients," he said. According to El-Ghamry, most toxic waste dumping occurs in the open sea rather than in the canal where each ship is accompanied by an Egyptian pilot and workers for the duration of its passage. Another deterrent is that navigation along the canal is observed by a network of control stations spaced every 10km.

The problem, says Mohamed El-Zarka, director of the solid waste and toxic substances department at the EEAA, is that waste samples must be examined abroad since Egypt has no internationally ac-

advanced technologies for lead recycling at home but have not hesitated to transfer the risks of part of their industry to poor countries," stated El-Zarka.

While claiming to invest in development, richer countries, according to El-Zarka, are only interested in taking advantage of the strict environment laws in their own countries. As a result, less developed countries are an easy target. "They get rid of dangerous equipment that is a serious threat to the environment by selling it to developing countries as well as giving them polluted food and expired products as grants. I think it is the responsibility of those industrial countries to pay compensation for exploiting poorer nations," he added.

"This type of business is not development; it is a crime against humanity and the environment."

Tebogo Phadu

knowledgeable laboratories. "Radioactive wastes are detected easily, but chemical wastes require hi-tech equipment that need to be periodically modernised," explained El-Zarka. He added that the EEAA is providing its laboratories, in cooperation with the Japanese government, with new hi-tech equipment.

El-Zarka emphasised that the development of industry should go hand-in-hand with developing waste treating technology. "They [developed countries] might use

Contamination watchdogs

IN THE absence of effective action to curb the growing international trade in toxic waste, the environmental group Greenpeace has taken on an unofficial role as global watchdog. In 1987, the non-governmental organisation (NGO) launched a campaign against the toxic waste trade in response to the alarming practice of developed countries shipping their toxic wastes to developing nations.

"The transfer of toxic waste from wealthy industrialised countries to developing nations is a practice which is both inhuman and unjust," said Fouad Hamdan, spokesman for Greenpeace's Mediterranean office. "It constitutes the transfer of a problem from one's own homeland and dumping it on another country, which in most cases is less equipped or even not equipped at all to deal with it," he added.

Greenpeace's anti-waste trade campaigners operate in much the same way as journalists, according to Hamdan. "They use wire and official reports and conduct interviews with waste traders, journalists, officials, local ecological groups and other NGOs," he explained.

The group's periodical reports provide details about operations involving toxic wastes. A 1995 Greenpeace report disclosed that an Italian company proposed projects to the South African government in May 1995 to develop industrial and shipping activities linked to the disposal of radioactive waste. The firm offered to invest US\$40 million in the projects which it claimed would generate more than 1,200 new employment opportunities. In December of the same year, Greenpeace discovered a plan to dump radioactive waste off the coast of South Africa.

Greenpeace's Waste Trade Inventory 1990 revealed that waste traders have attempted to ship more than 163 million tons of toxic wastes around the world since 1986. Ten million tons were exported to developing nations. "The total number of known shipments reveals just the tip of the iceberg — the actual figure is probably much higher," said Hamdan.

For some African countries, toxic waste trade is a significant source of national income. Since many of these countries do not enforce environmental codes, businessmen find the export of wastes a profitable activity. And local politicians are allegedly involved in the trade as well.

During the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) summit in 1988, Nigeria called for action to prevent waste dumping in Africa. Yet, soon after, it was discovered that some Nigerian authorities and top officials knowingly agreed to the disposal of toxic wastes in their country.

The same year, Greenpeace disclosed a list of 115 toxic waste shipments that were transferred from Western Europe to Third World nations including Mexico, Argentina, Morocco, Senegal, Gabon, Djibouti, and Zimbabwe. According to Greenpeace, 15,000 tons of toxic wastes were transferred to Guinea from the US through a Norwegian company. The Norwegian consultant was later arrested.

The report also cited a Swiss company which transferred at least five shipments of toxic wastes from Italy to Nigeria between 1987-88. Four thousand tons of toxic wastes were stored in the port of Koko for US\$250 per month. When the media released the details, the Nigerian government canceled the deal and the shipment roamed European ports before finally returning to Italy. The report also revealed a plan to build US\$100 million incinerator in Tonga with a capacity of 20,000 tons a year to burn American industrial wastes.

Unfortunately, poorer countries who are aid recipients from toxic waste exporting countries are vulnerable to the possibility of being used as dumping sites. Last year it was publicly revealed that in 1987, almost 2,411 tons of toxic wastes were exported from Italy and dumped in different sites in Lebanon. Due to international pressure, in 1988, the Italian government promised to take back all the waste it had exported. Its promise was never fulfilled.

"I asked the Lebanese environmental minister, Pierre Pharon why his government is not pressing for Italy to fulfill its promise. His answer was that Italy is giving Lebanon millions in grants and aid and, therefore, it would be inappropriate to embarrass Italy with this question," said Greenpeace's Hamdan.

According to Greenpeace, Lebanese authorities conducted a secret operation to collect toxic waste barrels to get rid of at least 26 tons of waste in land scattered throughout towns and villages. Lebanon has no central storage site for toxic wastes produced by local industry or by hospitals.



Basic facts and figures

- * Egypt, which has been using nuclear substances for 40 years, produces 13,000 tons of low radioactive waste every year, for industrial, medical and research purposes.
- * 2-2.5 million tons of toxic wastes are transferred every year from Western to Eastern Europe.
- * 250,000 tons of toxic wastes are transferred every year to developing countries.
- * 5.5 million tons were transferred from Western industrialised countries to 11 Asian states during the last four years.
- * More than 35 atomic piles need to be dumped every year.
- * The cost of dismantling nuclear weapons arsenals is estimated to be \$230 billion.
- * To get rid of toxic wastes, the US must spend \$100 billion, Germany \$30 billion, and the Netherlands \$6 billion.

Blueprint for action

ACCORDING to statistics from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), 98 per cent of the 400 million tons of toxic wastes produced annually worldwide comes from the world's most industrially advanced countries, members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Most OECD schemes claim some sort of "recycling" or "humanitarian benefit".

Activists have lobbied for a comprehensive ban on the trade of all wastes that pollute the environment. The result of their campaign bore fruit in Geneva on 25 March 1994 at the conference of the parties to the Basel Convention.

First convened in 1989, the Basel Convention called for the prohibition of the transfer of hazardous waste destined for final disposal from OECD to non-OECD states in gradual phases to be completed by 31 December 1997. The ban takes effect after that date. One hundred countries are party to the convention today including 16 from Africa, 28 from Asia, 25 from Western Europe, 11 from Eastern Europe, and 20 from South America.

The agreement forces rich countries to take full responsibility for their toxic waste problem by eliminating legal dumping on their neighbours," said Fouad Hamdan, spokesman for the environmental group Greenpeace's Mediterranean Office.

Despite the international agreements, the trade still persists. Some allege that big business is influencing governmental action. In 1995 the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), along with a small number of powerful governments, tried to reverse the Convention's ban. With the financial support of the US, Canadian, Australian and French governments, the ICC sponsored a US\$250,000 "workshop" in Dakar, Senegal where it campaigned for support to reverse the ban.

"They are fighting for their 'right' to export their toxic waste burden show to countries which are the least prepared to deal with it, rather than clean up their act at home," commented Jim Puckett, director of Greenpeace's International Anti-Toxic Campaign.

However, the effort to discredit the ban failed, despite the fact that 80 per cent of workshop speakers represented industries associated with hazardous waste export and very few speakers at the meeting represented governments of non-OECD countries.

Dr Mohamed El-Zarka, Egypt's representative to the Basel Convention, noted OECD's repeated attempts to retard the agreement. "In 1992, the G-7 demanded OECD countries stop exporting toxic wastes to non-OECD states." According to El-Zarka, OECD countries have been pushing to exempt certain substances and percentages of waste components from the ban. "UN workshops are currently working to identify toxic substances and their chemical forms and percentages that come under the prohibition," he explained.

Egypt signed the Basel Convention in 1992. It was the third African country after Nigeria and Senegal and the fourth Arab country after Saudi Arabia, Syria and Jordan to do so.

In 1986, the European Community passed restrictive legislation on toxic waste export to developing countries. It stipulated that importing countries should be made aware of the material and should also possess the ability to process it. Only Belgium, Denmark and Greece enacted the legislation.

The United States, which produces 230 million tons of toxic wastes every year, comprising 80 per cent of the world production, usually ships its waste in Nevada and South Carolina. But, due to domestic opposition, toxic wastes are now transferred to South America, Africa and Middle Eastern countries. According to a US Environment Agency report, there are 32,000 sites in the US which have been full of toxic wastes for several years and would require \$100 billion for disposal.

The Palestinian representative to the Basel Convention has accused Israel of turning the self-rule areas in Gaza and Jericho into dumping sites for toxic wastes. He cited a report compiled by a Dutch technical consulting company which had worked in Israel. The report shows that the safe environment sites in Israel can only store 48,000 tons out of the 100,000 tons of toxic wastes produced every year. The rest is dumped in the Occupied Territories which do not enjoy the protection of the Israeli environment law, according to the representative.

Last year, Greenpeace accused Israel of poisoning the Mediterranean by dumping toxic chemicals and industrial wastes into the sea. Greenpeace spokesmen indicated that an Israeli chemical company dumps 50,000 tons of toxic wastes in the Mediterranean annually with no reprimand from the Israeli government.

Refuse of war

World and regional wars have left behind a legacy of landmines, one-fifth of which are located in Egypt. Amira Howaidy investigates

In a matter of seconds, Ibrahim Sarhan Abu Rabie saw his left leg shoot through the air and land on the sand in Matruh Governorate. Abu Rabie is just one of the thousands of disabled victims of land mines buried in Egypt. His lawyer, Yasser El-Hodeibi, has filed a compensation law suit "for the death of 350 and the injury of 400 civilians" as a result of the land mines planted by the Allied and Axis armies during the second world war. El-Hodeibi said these were cases he had personally documented.

El-Hodeibi is demanding \$5 million compensation "from the American, German and French presidents because of their governments' direct responsibility in the planting of those mines". He argues that it was not just a matter of lost lives or "a lost leg or arm" that provoked him to take legal action, "but the inability of the Egyptian government to utilise hundreds of hectares of land because they are full of mines placed by other countries."

According to UNICEF's 1995 annual report, almost 800 people are killed monthly and 1,000 others are disabled as a result of accidents caused by the 23 million land mines buried in Egypt. The majority of the victims — mostly children and Bedouins — have lost either one or both legs or their

eyesight. Since most accidents happen in the desert or remote areas inhabited by poor Bedouins, they are not even reported.

A Red Cross report on land mine victims states that the artificial limbs of a child must be replaced every six months while an adult's must be replaced three to five times in a lifetime. The cost of each replacement is \$125, the total cost for lifetime replacements reaches \$3,125, the report said.

It is estimated that Egypt is home to one-fifth of the world's 110 million landmines. There are two major infested areas in Egypt. One is the Western Desert region stretching from Salloum on the border with Libya to Alamein, west of Alexandria. This was the theatre of massive military battles between the German and British armies in World War II. The other infested area is Sinai, the scene of three major wars between Egypt and Israel in 1956, 1967 and 1973.

Although the Egyptian armed forces have made several attempts to clear the fields, only 6,000 land mines have been removed. The process has been slow and risky because of the lack of maps indicating the exact sites of mines and the shifting of mines caused by climatic conditions. At least \$10 billion are required to clear Egypt's land mines —

an extremely prohibitive cost.

According to Hedayat Abdel-Nabi, deputy director of the UN Information Centre in Cairo, the UN has established a Humanitarian Affairs Administration to offer financial and rehabilitation support for landmine victims in countries including Afghanistan, Mozambique, Somalia, Cambodia, Angola, and Rwanda, in addition to small-scale projects in Kurdistan, Iraq, Kuwait, Georgia and former Yugoslavia. Egypt, however, has not received any support.

The Egyptian government has made several requests to the Allied and Axis states for financial and technical support. Yet, these efforts have only succeeded in garnering promises from Germany, Britain, France and the United States who are all party to the 1980 convention on certain conventional weapons. Entitled the "Convention on Prohibition or Restriction on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects", the second review conference held in Geneva earlier this month adopted an amended Protocol II to the treaty prohibiting the use of undetectable landmines.

In their final declaration, the 55 countries party to

the convention declared their conviction that "States should strive towards the goal of the eventual elimination of anti-personnel landmines, consistent with the terms of the General Assembly resolution 50/70(0), as well as a complete ban on their transfer." It did not, however, compel any of the parties responsible for planting landmines to take any effective action in eliminating them. UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros Ghali expressed his "deep disappointment" that the progress achieved to date falls short of what he had hoped for.

According to Ambassador Mahmoud Kareem, head of the nuclear weapons disarmament department at the Foreign Ministry, Egypt, which was only an observer nation at the conference, successfully persuaded participants to agree to its suggestions for the final declaration. The contents of the final declaration, he said, were "unprecedented" and Egypt could rely on them in the future to urge countries to offer support for the elimination of its landmines.

Still many military experts remain unsatisfied. The late Maj. Gen. Hassan El-Badri, a military and strategic expert, described the Geneva declaration as "ineffective" and blamed "weak Egyptian diplomatic efforts" for failing to "take firmer stands".

He noted that 50 years after the end of World War II, it has become an inevitable necessity "for us to demand our right to financial and technical support from the Allied and Axis states."

Although the armed forces have cleared some areas, he said, the lack of maps and advanced detection equipment, still make the "safe" areas quite dangerous. "During the numerous visits I made to the Western Desert, Alamein and Sinai, I have seen with my own eyes people getting killed and injured in places that have been cleared," said El-Badri. The ideal method to completely clear Egypt's landmines would employ advanced satellites that provide pictures of the buried mines, according to El-Badri.

Since diplomatic efforts have not yet achieved the desired results, Egyptian non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have taken on the responsibility of launching an international campaign to eliminate and ban landmines. The Egyptian Committee for Solidarity has already organised two conferences "with the aim of making this year a real beginning for landmine clearance," said Ahmed Hamroush, the committee's president. Although the Geneva Convention was disappointing in some aspects, Hamroush said, it "brought us closer to what we want".

Things that make a statement

Heads of Arab museums and antiquities organisations have much to worry about, ranging from the flourishing trade in stolen antiquities, to hammering out a unified Arab museum terminology. Omayma Abdel-Latif reports on the efforts of the new Arab branch of the International Council on Museums



photo: Sherif Sobhy

They are ambitious. They seek out a presence on the Internet. They want to unite as an Arab museum league. But their experiences differ. While some are frustrated at budget constraints, others are hard-hit by regional politics and the Western trade in stolen antiquities. Most are concerned with methods of museum security. All bemoan the lack of unified museum terminology in the Arab world.

A new-born organisation that seeks to pay heed to the region's museum affairs was officially recognised last July by the Paris-based International Council on Museums (ICOM). Just last week, this new Arab branch of ICOM brought together museum and antiquities heads from its member countries: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen. Member countries Djibouti, Iraq and Somalia did not participate in the Cairo conference.

"This conference is the first step towards a unified Arab policy on museums," said Abdel-Halim Nouredin, head of Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) and ICOM-Arab, in his opening speech. "Museums are not only places to restore or exhibit our heritage. They are an emotional statement, they maintain our morality."

Not only was ICOM-Arab set up because "the Arab world was not well enough represented within the world organisation of museums," said Elizabeth de Porte, ICOM's secretary-general, but the future of Arab museums may depend on it. "The art and science of museums can be developed only through regional cooperation," said Saroj Ghose, head of ICOM, who believes that creative and new ideas will be the by-product of this cooperation.

The official agenda of the three-day event included public sessions and closed workshops on practical issues: the training of curators and restorers, management, standardisation of terminology, development of computer software and the compilation of personal directories and registers of stolen artworks. Delegates even had the chance to visit the Egyptian, Islamic and Coptic museums as well as the Regional Information Technology and Software Engineering Centre (RITSEC). On the surface, the conference proceeded smoothly. But some issues — too sensitive for formal expression — found frank and heated controversy privately.

Ali Al-Hadory, head of the Libyan department of antiquities, voiced his concern to delegates from Egypt, Algeria and UNESCO about an alleged international mafia that he blames for "stealing the Arab nation's heritage and then creating museums in the West." He added that the European countries that participated in a conference in Rome in 1993 said that trading in antiquities was permissible, whether or not they were stolen.

His concern was shared by the head of the Algerian delegation, Sabah Ferdi, who said that antiquities, stolen from Algeria's national museum, are on sale in the galleries of Western art capitals like Geneva and Paris. She recommended that ICOM ask European countries to help return these stolen items to their countries of origin.

The increasing phenomenon of illicit trafficking in antiquities led some delegates to raise the issue of museum security. The Israeli government, "has taken advantage of poor security in museums to steal whatever they can lay their hands on," said Suzy Hakman, the Lebanese head of antiquities. Though Lebanese police clamped down on an Israeli antiquities trafficking network only a month ago, some of the country's museums were bombed in the latest Israeli aggression against Lebanon. "It's not enough for them to kill our people, they also steal our heritage," she said, adding that the Lebanese government recently issued a law banning the trade and export of antiquities outside the country. "Some stolen items have been retrieved from national museums in Switzerland, Belgium and London," said Hakman.

In sidebar discussions with the UNESCO representative, the ICOM head and other delegates, the Palestinian delegation tried to muster up support for the recovery of lost Palestinian cultural artefacts stolen by the Israeli government. Though UNESCO set up a division concerned with the preservation of Palestinian heritage after the Palestinian National Authority took over, the Palestinian delegation remains unsatisfied.

Since projects to conserve history have been minimal throughout the Israeli occupation, there are no museums in the Palestinian autonomous areas. But a Palestinian heritage museum is now under construction, said Walid Al-Sherif, coordinator of the Palestinian National Committee (PNC). It will be more than just a place to preserve history, it will constitute a political statement, he said. "We are documenting archaeological finds in Palestine from the turn of the century. The museum will also include documents on the Palestinian struggle against the British mandate and the Israeli occupation," Al-Sherif told the *Weekly*. UNESCO will provide technical expertise to assist in their museum development.

While the Palestinians are struggling to build their first museum, Saudi Arabia is witnessing a "museum boom", according to Dr Abdullahi Sahid, head of Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Culture's Heritage and Museum Department. "We now have 12 museums covering different historic periods of Saudi Arabia," he told the delegates. And there are future projects in store, such as a museum in Mecca in the Qasr Al-Za'at (the visitor's place) that will house Islamic artefacts. Another Islamic museum will be set up in the Hajar railway station, built during the Ottoman era.

Be it for new or long-established museums, some member states proposed that training centres and courses for museum personnel be set up. Already, the Nubia Museum in Aswan



photo: Mohamed Wassef

In the entrance hall of the Egyptian Museum (above right) space enables easy circulation of visitors. In Luxor Museum each individual artefact is dramatically highlighted like the alabaster *dyad* of Sobek and Thutmose III

plans to coach seven trainees from the Arab world on museum education, such as the exhibition of items, computerised documentation and "safety nets", or museum security measures.

And some new privatisation ideas were shared. Morocco's representative, head of the Moroccan antiquities department Abdel-Aziz Touri, spoke of an increasing phenomenon in his country: private galleries are in fashion, trading in antiquities is permissible and some antiquities owners can opt to establish their own museums. "Any one who possesses unique artefacts dating to Islamic, imperialist and Graeco-Roman periods," he said, "can put them on public

display for a low-priced ticket. This is already happening in one of Marrakech's old buildings." This privatisation scheme, according to Touri, will help the government keep tabs on artefacts that people have long kept in the privacy of their homes and will facilitate tracing their origin in case they are smuggled out of the country.

Also on the agenda and subject to more heated debate was the issue of museum terminology. Should museums use Egyptian, Levant, Gulf or North African terminology? "There is always a problem of terminology. This issue should be promptly addressed so that a standard is adopted by all museums in the region," said

On the fringes

* THE Paris-based International Council on Museums (ICOM) is the highest-ranking professional museum body in the world with about 10,000 members from 125 countries. According to its president, ICOM enjoys a consulting status to UNESCO and functions through its two national and international committees.

* UNESCO, according to its representative Sonya Ramzy, is raising 27 worldwide campaigns to save the world's heritage. The only campaign which involves museums is Aswan's Nubia Museum for which UNESCO has provided technical expertise.

* SUPREME Council of Antiquities (SCA) head, Abdel-Halim Nouredin, hammered out a deal with the head of Silverstone Company, which is undertaking construction and exhibition for the Nubia Museum, whereby the Cairo representative of the British company promised that the museum will be inaugurated in less than a year.

* THE first Arab Museum Newsletter, containing examples of unique ways to preserve heritage from the Tebea Museum in Algeria and news on a museum management workshop held in Hammamet, Tunisia, last month, was distributed among ICOM participants. It also covered news on Jordanian museums and the first antiquities exhibition in Al-Sharqa, United Arab Emirates. The newsletter was edited by the Algerian Council of Museums with the collaboration of the Rockefeller Foundation.

* THE next ICOM-Arab conference will be held in Tunisia in 1997. Among the scheduled topics are the illicit trafficking of antiquities and Arab museums on the Internet.

Shadia Enabi, head of the Tunisian delegation. She suggested that all Arab countries be committed to creating a unified directory of Arabic museum terminology and added that AF-RICOM — ICOM's Africa branch — managed to standardise museum terminology in over 15 African countries.

Ideas about an Arab museum information bank, CD-ROM programmes on Arab heritage and a presence in cyberspace gained ground among the conferees. "All excavations, the most important museums and masterpieces, should be available on the Internet. This would attract a massive audience," said Na'ela El-Wartuni, head of the governmental Tunisia Museum department. The head of ICOM and the UNESCO representative showed support for these proposals which now rank among ICOM-Arab's top priorities.

Though many recommendations came out of the conference, some delegates remained a bit sceptical. Tunisia's Aisha Bokley, head of ICOM's Tunisian National Committee, gained considerable attention when she was given the floor and demanded that a practical approach to deal with a unified museum policy should be adopted. "We do not want to come up with nice recommendations and put them in a nice book, on a nice shelf, in a nice room," she said. She asked about the means of financing the organisation and demanded that Arab NGOs and heritage-protecting organisations work side-by-side. "Some of Amman's projects remained in drawers," she said, referring to a museum conference held there in 1994. "This time we want to see that something is being done."

EGYPT AIR

Telephone numbers of EGYPT AIR offices in governorates:

Abu Simbel Sales Office:	324836-324735
Alexandria Offices: Rank:	4833357-4833776
Giza:	5845461-5845434
Airport Office:	4218464-4227800-4282837-4281989
Aswan Office:	3150001/2/3/4
Airport Office:	488397-488568
Assiut Office:	3231511-3227111-334000-329497
Mansoura Office:	363978-363733
Hurgada Office:	443591/4
Airport Office:	442883-443597
Ismaïlia Office:	328337-221950-221951/2-328936
Luxor Office:	3085001/2/3/4
Airport Office:	308567/8
Luxor Office Karnak:	382340
Marsa Matruh Office:	934398
Menoufia Office (Sheikh El Kham):	233302-233523-233522
New Valley Office:	408941/695
Port Said Office:	224129-222876-220921
Port Said Office Karnak:	228833-220970
Sharm El Sheikh Office:	600314-600409
Airport Office:	600400
Taba Office:	608530010-530011
Direct:	5783620
Tanta Office:	311758311700
Zakazik Office:	349829-349830/1



Masterpiece of the month

Love goddess restored

A MARBLE Aphrodite rises from the sea, followed by a dolphin. This scene now greets Cairo Museum enthusiasts, who previously visited her in a room devoted to Graeco-Roman objects, reports Nevine El-Aref.

A member of the great Olympian council of gods, Aphrodite was a goddess of beauty, love and joy, but also, in Sparta, the goddess of war.

"Her cult owes a deal to Oriental influence, probably from the Syrian goddess Ishtar," said Mohamed Saleh, director general of the museum. Many temples were built in her honour in Cyprus where she was known as "Kypria", lady of Cyprus. Her cult centre in Egypt was at Asfih, south of Cairo.

Discovered in Alexandria, the statue dates back to the turn of the third century BC. The restoration of both legs and arms was first carried out during the Graeco-Roman period, but was inadequate, said Samir Abaza, head of the Restoration Department at the Cairo Museum. It is now on display after restoration which involved the removal of cement and iron bars from a previous restoration and their replacement with stainless steel and a special glue.

Trekking west

The large desert expanse west of the Nile River has made investors see green. Rehab Saad surveys the tourist services in store in years to come

The oases of the Western Desert will soon find their place on the tourist map. With more than its fair share of archaeological sites and natural beauty, the area has potential to lure desert safari enthusiasts, historical buffs and revellers in mineral-rich hot water springs and hot curative sands. But if you don't like pitching up tents, then the main problem is the lack of accommodations. Though EgyptAir flies to Siwa, the other oases remain accessible only by road.

A pioneering company is planning to build hotels in the oases and develop the main tourist attractions for this potentially lucrative area which constitutes more than two-thirds of Egypt's total land area. "It has enormous tourist potential," said Ahmed Zaki Abdel-Hamid, the company's chairman of the board.

As of now, existing accommodation is of inferior quality for large-scale tourism. His company plans to build three and four-star hotels in Al-Kharga Oasis (with a 102-room capacity), in the city of Mui in the Dakhla Oasis (with a 66-room capacity), and in the Siwa, Bahariya and Farafra oases. The hotel architecture will be inspired

by the Bedouin and Islamic heritage of the area, which is in keeping with another one of the company's objectives: preserving Bedouin culture. "We are ready to buy traditional houses and turn them into tourist attractions depicting the lifestyle of oasis dwellers, whereby social and environmental activities of the desert community can be displayed, and folkloric arts revived," said Abdel-Hamid, who is collaborating with concerned bodies such as the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Authority (EEAA) in this effort.

Investors also intend to upgrade the road links between the oases of Wadi AL-Gadid — the Bahariya, Farafra, Kharga and Dakhla oases — and join them to the Giza and Matruh governorates.

Another ambitious project is to connect the oases with Luxor and the Red Sea. Minister of Tourism Dr Mamdouh El-Beltagi considers the project "a great effort made by pioneers" and added that one of Egypt's major travel agencies is backing the project, which the ministry has approved. "We are confident in the area's marketing potential," he said.



Mamdouh El-Beltagi

Another close kick

Victory in Brazil has certainly put the Egyptian national taekwon do team back on the winning track. Eman Abdel-Moeti reports



Taekwon do players could bring Egypt some medals in the 2000 Olympics

photo: Emad Abdel-Hadi

Just when everyone thought that luck had abandoned the national taekwon do team, last week six team members returned home from the World Cup in Brazil with enough medals to place Egypt in third place behind Mexico and South Korea.

Talaat Mabrouk brought home the gold in the under 54kg division while Yehia Allam, in the over 83kg division, and Tamer Abdel-Moneim, in the under 70kg class, both won silver medals. A bronze medal went to Ahmed Zahran who participated in the under 76kg class.

The team's performance at this year's World Cup, held from 22-26 May, was a vast improvement over last November when they placed 13th in the 1995 World Championship in the Philippines.

Though the team won first place at the sixth All Africa Games in Zimbabwe last September, just two weeks before the World Championship, a sudden shuffling of board members and the president of the Egyptian Taekwon Do Federation interrupted the team's training programme.

But after Amr Kheiry, a former world champion and avid taekwon do lover, came on board as manager, the team began intensive training, participated in friendly competitions in South Korea for two weeks, and topped it all off with a winning performance at this year's World Cup.

"People were astonished after our poor performance in the Philippines, especially after we won the 1994 World Cup in the Cayman Islands," said

team member Ahmed Zahran.

"But the difference is that the World Championship hosts an average of 90 countries, whereas the World Cup hosts only the top 16 countries," he explained.

Team members agree that they prefer competing in the Cup, where they are matched with higher skilled players and consequently have more opportunity to demonstrate their own skill.

"In the championship we play more matches than we do in the World Cup and we often are matched with opponents who play to break us rather than to gain points for skill or technique," Zahran said.

Another reason for their poor performance in the Philippines was that the championship came soon after the All Africa Games and the team was suffering

from exhaustion and broken limbs. "The Africans are rough players and caused injuries to two of our team members," said Yehia Allam, the oldest team member.

This year in Brazil, victory seemed shaky since only six of the teams' eight members made it past the first round. Mahmoud Shalabi, preoccupied with his final exams, was knocked out in the first round. After Mahmoud Salah met a strong Italian opponent in the first round, he was quickly knocked out.

Meanwhile, since taekwon do will be an official Olympic sport starting in the year 2000, the national team have their eyes set on more gold medals.

Olympic countdown

Final volley

According to the International Volleyball Federation, the United States, China, South Korea, the Netherlands, Japan and Ukraine will form Pool A in the Atlanta Olympic women's volleyball tournament. A draw at the tournament's end placed Russia, Canada, Brazil, Peru, Cuba and Germany in Pool B.

The federation also announced that in men's Olympic volleyball, the United States, Brazil, Bulgaria, Poland, Cuba and Argentina will form Pool A, while Yugoslavia, South Korea, Tunisia, the Netherlands, Italy and Russia will be placed in Pool B. The Olympic Volleyball tournament will run from 19 July to 4 August.

Extra weight

THE INTERNATIONAL Weightlifting Federation has granted the United States two additional athletes in the upcoming Atlanta Olympics, with the possibility of at least one more being added before the games begin.

The extras were granted because the United States is the host country, and although no American has won a medal in the last two Olympics, the US has acquitted itself well in previous games.

The Americans originally qualified for just three spots in the Atlanta Olympics by virtue of a 31st-place finish in the 1995 World Championships in China. Other countries will have as many as 10 athletes participating.

Seventy-four countries will participate in the weightlifting competitions more than any other sport.

Ambush ads

IN RESPONSE to companies that are making unauthorised use of the Olympic names and symbols, Olympic officials are striking back at ambush marketers with an ad campaign of their own. With corporate sponsors paying up to \$40 million for the rights to use Olympic emblems, game organisers are under increasing pressure to prevent consumers from thinking that any unauthorised business has ties to the Olympics.

"We hope these ads never run, because they are designed to deal with a situation we are trying very hard to avoid," said Darby Coker, a spokesman for the Atlanta Olympic marketing office.

The Olympic ads include the telephone number and address of the executive responsible for the unauthorised ad. "Advertisers who refuse to modify misleading ads will find that we won't hesitate to tell the full story to the public," Darby said.

The Atlanta Olympics Committee (AOC) is spending about \$10 million in an effort to stop ambush ads, which have been a growing problem at recent games. AOC recently announced it had hired a firm to monitor television and print ads to identify counterfeiters.

Runner's blues

FLORENCE Griffith Joyner said she has an Achilles tendon injury that may jeopardise her chance for an Olympic comeback.

The three-time Olympic gold medalist, who has been training for the Atlanta Games in the 400 metres, has tendinitis in her right leg and will undergo an exam this week to determine if she can continue training or will need surgery.

Griffith Joyner, 36, still needs to make a qualifying time for the 400 metres before the US Olympic track trials begin 14 June in Atlanta. There are only two track meets left in which she can do that.

"Time is not on my side," conceded Griffith Joyner, "but if I don't make it, I'll still be cheering everyone on."

Griffith Joyner holds world records for the 100 and 200 metre dashes and won three gold medals and a silver medal in the 1988 Seoul Olympics.

Hockey revolt

PAKISTAN'S Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto may be asked to intervene in a four-day revolt by senior hockey players that has delayed selection for the Atlanta Olympics.

Two dozen players have boycotted the trials, demanding the dismissal of Pakistan Hockey Federation Secretary Mudasar Asghar, coach Manzoor-ul-Hasan and the five selectors.

"We want to meet the Prime Minister because it's a matter which concerns the future of Pakistan hockey," said 28-year-old former captain Shahbaz Ahmad.

Egypt takes squash third

The Egyptian mixed squash team of Salma Shaboun, Ahmed Barada, and Omar El-Borlosi have won third place at the first World Mixed Cup in Malaysia from 28 May to 2 June. Around 20 countries took part in the championship, and the Egyptian team entered the semifinals after beating Canada, Italy, and Wales. They lost to England 3-0 in the semi-final, then defeated South Africa 2-1 to take third place. In the finals, Australia beat England to win the title.

World Cup wars

In a meeting in Zurich last Friday, FIFA, football's governing body, made a decisive move to end the feud between would-be hosts South Korea and Japan, by approving the co-hosting of the 2002 World Cup. FIFA's executive committee voted unanimously for the decision just a day before the deadline for the announcement of a World Cup host.

However, such is the depth of the bitterness between the two nations that many fear that future decisions regarding the event will spark further controversy. Issues still to be decided include who will get the bigger share of the action, how to agree sponsorship and how to coordinate the two independent organising committees.

Although the rivals have pledged to do their best to ensure a feud-free, successful World Cup, their initial reactions have not provoked optimism. "There will be technical problems," a Japanese official announced ominously shortly after the Zurich decision.

"It's going to be terrible... but we have to think positive," summed up coach Yasuhiko Okudera of Japan's JEF United Ichihara.

Undoubtedly the most controversial issue still to be decided is who will host the cup final.

"We have to win as much as we can in the negotiations over who will get the important games, such as the opening match and the final," vowed Kim Won-Dong, spokesman for the Korean Football Association. Meanwhile in Yokohama, Japan, where a 70,000-seat soccer stadium is currently under construction, the city's mayor told a press conference that he hoped his city would get the showpiece.

Which side will finally give way is anyone's guess, but FIFA President

The feud between Japan and South Korea over who should host the 2002 World Cup was finally put to rest when FIFA authorised the two nations to host the event jointly. But as one battle ends, another may be just beginning, reports Eric Asomugha

Jose Havelange announced that a working group had been set up to look into the question. The group has until December to reach a decision.

The idea of co-hosting was conceived last July, amidst mutual accusations of bribery and unfair practices. But the campaign did not stop there. Also dished up — by the South Koreans — were Japan's role as a coloniser of Korea from 1910 until the end of World War II, and its record of harsh treatment of subject people throughout that period.

Sultan Ahmed Shah, the Asian Football Confederation's president, led the way, calling on FIFA to approve a joint hosting to promote peace and avoid endangering the development of world football. The campaign, he argued, had moved beyond the bounds of ordinary international rivalry, and required an extraordinary decision to stop it. This view was supported by both the European and African federations, but it was reported that FIFA was dubious until the eleventh hour.

Neither Japan nor South Korea supported the proposal, even though their growing antipathy had attracted the attention of politicians, as well as

sports officials, both outside and inside the two countries concerned.

Both countries had promised to donate the profits of the tournament, which will be watched by a television audience of some 40 billion people, to worldwide soccer development. Japan based its bid on superior technological advancement and financial power. The nation has earmarked \$5.2 billion to spend on construction, including high-tech "virtual stadia" with giant 3-D screens to create a live-match effect for fans who can't watch the match itself. South Korea, on the other hand, has a modest budget of \$1.3 billion to spend on the new infrastructure. The Koreans based their campaign, on, among other things, their stronger soccer record — the South Korean national team has reached three World Cup finals; Japan has never made it that far.

The World Cup is now the second-biggest sporting event after the Olympics. The first World Cup was played in Uruguay in 1930 with 13 nations competing. When Spain hosted the cup in 1982, 24 nations took part. Thirty-four countries are expected to converge on France for the 1998 cup, and it is likely to be a similar story for 2002 World Cup.

And as the prestige and economic advantages of hosting the event grow, along with the event itself, it is hardly surprising that nations are fighting tooth and nail for the honour. FIFA's refusal of Africa's bids to host the event, despite two consecutive bids from Morocco, is still fresh in memory. Whatever the rights and wrongs of that decision, a beleaguered FIFA is being drawn into international power games which are surely beyond its remit as a sporting body.

Egyptian umpires

Egypt's tennis juniors will play in international competitions this summer — as will their compatriots who umpire the game, reports Nashwa Abdel-Tawab

With Wimbledon only weeks away, the British Tennis Federation has chosen two young Egyptian umpires, both holders of the profession's bronze badge, to participate in the world's top lawn tennis championship. Among the 180 umpires and line judges who will preside over the 252 matches in both the qualifying rounds and the main competition of Wimbledon 1996, 64 will come from outside Britain.

It will not, however, be the first time Wael Abbas and Ashraf Nasr have seen Wimbledon's 17 well prepared grass courts. Last year Abbas umpired three matches in the qualifying rounds and three in the main competition without a hitch. Nasr, who only had a white badge at the time, was employed as a line judge.

This year, the British Tennis Federation stipulated that umpires in the main competition had either to be British or to have a silver or gold badge. Abbas and Nasr will, therefore, only be line judging in the main competition this year, but they will get their chance to umpire in the qualifying rounds. "The choice of the umpires is with the chief British supervisors and the best five umpires in the world, who are handling the tournament," said Abbas.

Meanwhile, the British Tennis Federation has asked for two further Egyptian umpires, Magdi Samat with a bronze badge and Ibrahim Zaki with a white badge, to officiate at other tournaments in Britain such as junior and senior competitions. Out of the total of five Egyptian umpires who hold bronze badges, three will be gaining experience in the United Kingdom this year.

Egypt's young tennis players are also set to participate in important international competitions this summer. The International Tennis Federation (ITF) has granted five Egyptian juniors — out of eight names given by the Egyptian Tennis Federation (ETF) — a

place in an international team this summer. "They were chosen for their potential and for the serious programmes being organised for them by the ETF," said ETF Secretary-General Scifallah Fahmi. The international team consists of eight players from Africa: five from Egypt, two from South Africa and one from Morocco. The team will play in a five-week ITF tour of Europe.

In the under-18 group, Sherif Zaher and Karim Maamoun will play in Denmark, Holland, Germany, Switzerland and the Czech Republic between 25 June and 28 July. In the under-14 group, Dina Khalil and Khaled El-Dorri will play in Holland, Belgium, Germany and France between 8 July and 11 August.

Marwan Zewar, the under-16 African champion, will be playing in a southern Africa tour rather than going to Europe, because he has not attained a high enough ITF under-16 ranking to enable him to play in the ITF international team of African juniors. Zewar broke his arm recently and lost his previously high ranking through being unable to play. He will play matches in South Africa, Malawi and Zimbabwe and hopefully gain much needed ITF points. The tour will be preceded by a two-week training programme at the ITF training centre in South Africa which starts on 8 July.

After the juniors return from their summer tours, the ETF is organising the Movenpick international championship and a junior tour to Cyprus, Syria and Lebanon. Meanwhile the Egyptian senior team are preparing to meet the Ivory Coast from 10 to 12 July at Cairo's Gezira Club. Of the four-man team, Tamer El-Sawi and Hisham Hameida are currently in America, while Amr Ghoneim and Khaled Baligh are training together in Egypt. The meeting will be the second in the Davis Cup Euro-African Qualification Zone V.

A driving force

RALLY driving has traditionally been a male preserve, but a few women drivers, and co-drivers, are beginning to take part, attracted by the challenge of a sport which combines speed with endurance and the freedom of the open road.

Egypt's Pharaoh's Rally remains a very male affair, however, reports Dalila El-Hennawy. And of the few women who have entered the Pharaoh's as co-drivers, none have shown the persistence of Samia Allouba. The next rally will be her fourth as co-driver to her husband.

The co-driver is basically responsible for navigation, but with the added element of speed. The driver not only has to get from A to B, he has to get there in the fastest time possible.

"In the beginning my husband would enter for fun, adventure and the satisfaction he gained from completing the course," said Allouba, who owns a health and fitness centre in

Maadi. But her husband, Azzam El-Farouqi, is not Egyptian and the rules stated that he needed an Egyptian partner on the course. So after much persistence, she agreed to be his co-driver. The pair are now highly experienced and accustomed to doing well.

"Winning the rally depends on what kind of vehicle you drive," explained Allouba. "We usually drive a Jeep Cherokee, and we generally win our category of the competition."

However, things have not always gone their way. In Allouba's first rally, the couple were in an ex-Austrian army truck. The truck turned over, and Allouba believes that only her high level of fitness saved her. "If it wasn't for teaching my aerobics classes, I don't think I would have been able to push the door open with my legs," she said. That year, three people died in the rally.

While overturning is an exception, breaking down in the desert is more or less par for the course. Luckily help is usually at hand in the form of back-up trucks. "We got stranded in the desert in both the second and third rallies," she recalled. "Every time I have had to stay alone in the car while my husband goes off in the truck to try and find the necessary equipment."

But while she is happy to be a navigator, Allouba has no intentions of entering the rally as a driver. "It's a challenge and the most wonderful adventure," she said. "People think I'm mad, but I don't pay attention to what society dictates in this matter. However, I wouldn't be tempted to drive in an all-female team. I think there are times during a rally when you need a man's physical strength. I think that male-female teams are very successful."

Edited by Inas Mazhar



women drivers invading the men's world of auto sports

Gamil Shafiq: Deep waters

The surface is still — there, just below, is a flicker of silver: a fish, or lovers entwined, or the gleam of a wide-open eye



photo: Randa Shearh

The excitement of the *moulid* is closely associated with the fever that accompanies the arrival of the circus. The Akif Troupe and Hagg Hassan El-Hilw's company come to Tanta after the cotton harvest has been sold and money is more plentiful than at other times of the year. Tents are set up around the town and cattle are slaughtered, the meat given away to the poor. There are free meals every night, and a spirit of celebration.

Every year, the *moulid* comes to Tanta. Every year, Gamil would wait for the *moulid*. As a small boy, he probably had not acquired the distance that allows him to describe the festival, today, as an "authentic popular carnival." It is not contempt for the folkloric — merely time, and Cairo, and... well, life, maybe, and the company of intellectuals, and the fascination for all things original and popular that now permeates the artsy scene in the capital. When Cairene intellectuals remember their native villages, however, it is often as abstract, glossy creations, divorced from the embarrassment of illiterate parents and no running water. Gamil's memories may be a bit formalised, but they do not make him squirm. The distance, after all, is maybe a realisation that the *moulid* is far away.

Gamil Shafiq has kind, tired eyes and the shuffling demeanour of a friendly loner. His face lights up with pleasure when he remembers the enactment of the *Tal'at Al-Khalifa*, when someone playing El-Sayed El-Badawi would ride out on a horse, at the head of a procession of Sufis and craftsmen, flags overhead.

But it was the circus, and not the *moulid*, which provided the subject matter for Gamil's bachelorette project. He lived with the El-Hilw company in order to be able to draw properly, so that he could capture not only the glittering trapeze artists but also Ammar, who fed the donkeys. The sketches are still around, somewhere.

When he was not drawing, Gamil spent most of his time sitting on the banks of the canal near the family home, fishing and brooding. There were stories about a female *jinn* who drew people into the canal then held them under until they drowned. His fear of the *jinn*'s wiles, however, hardly prevented him from venturing into the murky waters — and contracting bilharzia twice.

Gamil Shafiq already knew, back then, that he would draw. Names instantly recognised today as belonging to the "new generation" of Egyptian artists were his classmates at Al-Ahmediya Secondary school in Tanta, among them caricaturist Ahmed Hegazi and sculptor Ibrahim El-Washabi. What may have started out as a childhood hobby or scribbles in the margins of copybooks did not end there. In a brief, fleeting moment of nostalgia, Gamil might shake his head: "We were allowed to be exceptional." The headmaster made allowances for talented students, setting aside rooms in

which they could draw and nurturing their enthusiasm for painting. At home, Gamil had to hide his drawings under the bed when his father came home from work at the Delta Railway Company, but when he graduated, his only desire was to go to art school.

Of the move to Cairo he seems to have retained only pleasant memories. To the young man fresh from Tanta, the city must not always have been kind. He shrugs. "It was... like the *jinn* in the canal. It was entering the unknown. But Cairo was kinder then. It took people in. You could find a place to stay. It was more... welcoming."

Then again, there were still places where the city was in transition, not yet fully confident in its urbanism, like the basement flat that would flood when the Nile overflowed its banks. Adam Henein lived down the street; there was Salah Jahin, and Gamil's roommates, Mohieddin El-Labadi and Nabil Tag. There was the "Agouza flat", where El-Ahmed, Sayed Khamis and Sayed Higab stayed too, and where poets and writers arriving in Cairo would touch down before launching themselves into the confusion of the big city — still a little green around the gills, not yet the fixtures of the downtown intellectual scene that they were later to become.

Even art school was a nice surprise. Gamil remembers the day his father came to Cairo with him. The doorkeeper at the College of Fine Arts advised against enrolling: "They're all a bunch of sissies," he

found jobs at a time when their paintings would not have brought in more than the price of the canvas.

Every day was a discovery. For five piastres, there was classical music at the Opera on Friday mornings. There were lectures and discussions, cultural centres and just sitting around in coffee shops. Tanta, inevitably, grew smaller in the mind's eye, became limited — slightly stifling, perhaps, because Gamil gradually grew to like spending the night there less and less. He still visited, but it was no longer home.

Back in Cairo, he would plunge in headlong once again, his sketchbook with him wherever he went, taking in the upmarket galleries on Qasr El-Aini, the faces at Al-Husseini. "There was no hostility. Now, people are defensive, it's 'Why are you drawing me?'" As if the artist's upper hand snatches away a bit of the soul. "Things were clear. The popular was popular and real, and so was the aristocratic. Now things are confused, borders are less clear-cut." But when he wants a rest, he still goes into the streets off Al-Husseini, where neighbourhoods are folded in on themselves and their inhabitants.

He started to draw professionally for *Al-Mogalla* ("The Magazine"), *Al-Fuwan Al-Sha'biya* ("Popular Arts") and *Dar Al-Ta'awun*, a publishing house which had put out the first publication targeting *fallahin*. His work was seen by larger audiences, but mainly, he says, he benefited artistically, "seeing Egypt from the inside: Nubia to Salloum. It's important for the artist

His lack of freedom was also manifested, more tangibly, in the fact that, after 1967, travelling abroad was forbidden. Elsewhere, to Gamil, became a synonym for possibility. The first opportunity was the 1970 Venice Biennale. He hopped on a boat and took off to Europe, for an impromptu three-month spree of freedom. He sat on sidewalks and drew for a living. The police chased him out of St Mark's Square, so he went to the central station, and kept on drawing. People bought the pictures, and he drew some more, selling off the pieces as he went along. In Austria, and then in Germany, he drew people — thousands of portraits — and rediscovered the German expressionists.

Back in Cairo, he took a four-year course in art criticism at the Higher Institute of Art and, with a diploma in mural painting, took off again, this time to work with ALESCO in adult education — "eighty per cent of what we absorb is visual". He travelled from Somalia to Mauritania to familiarise himself with different visual languages.

Depression was waiting at the Cairo airport. It was a bad time, and he could have gone around or through it by different routes. But he wanted no psychiatrists, no prescriptions or carefully timed schedules designed to keep the thing at bay. He went back to fishing, and found... patience, perhaps, and the companionship of silent men, pondering the glittering black waters into which their lines sank without a sound, and waiting, waiting,

alogue. I respected the rocks, painted with them, not on them." After the group show, he gave the 150-odd stone fish away — to the other artists and the staff.

Fishes and... leaves. Gamil Shafiq cooks, and draws, and the connection is not as heart-rendingly cliché as it seems. He really does cook — washes and chops and kneads with a pure, amused, efficient enjoyment that recalls the pleasure of mud-pies and finger-painting. It is then, perhaps, and when he sings — the songs of Sheikh Sayed (Darwish), popular songs from Iraq... — that the peculiar expression is most clear on his face: melancholy, tender amusement, a wry, faintly tired affection, the gentle self-mockery born of a certain acceptance.

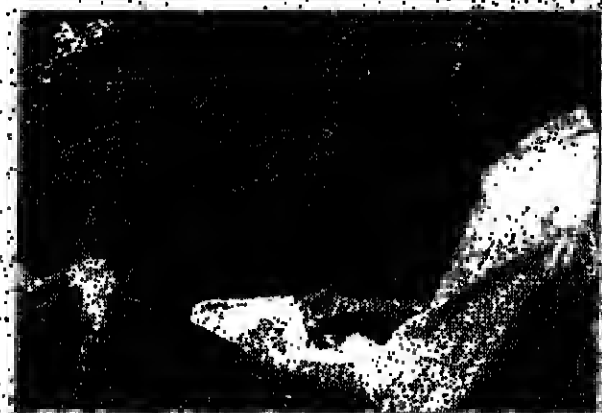
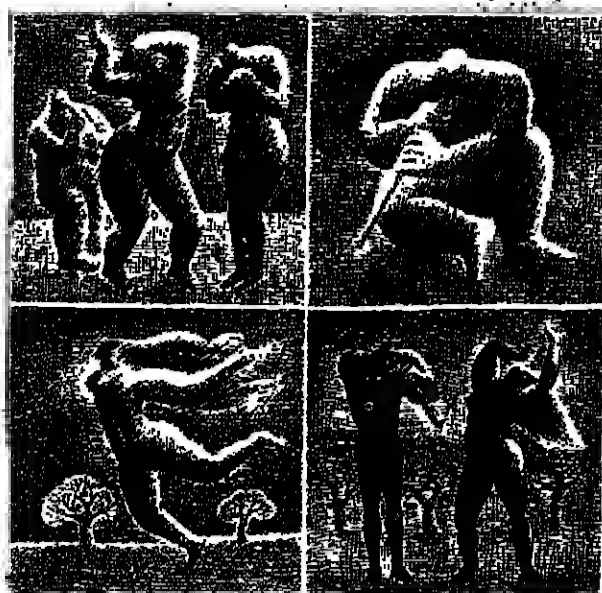
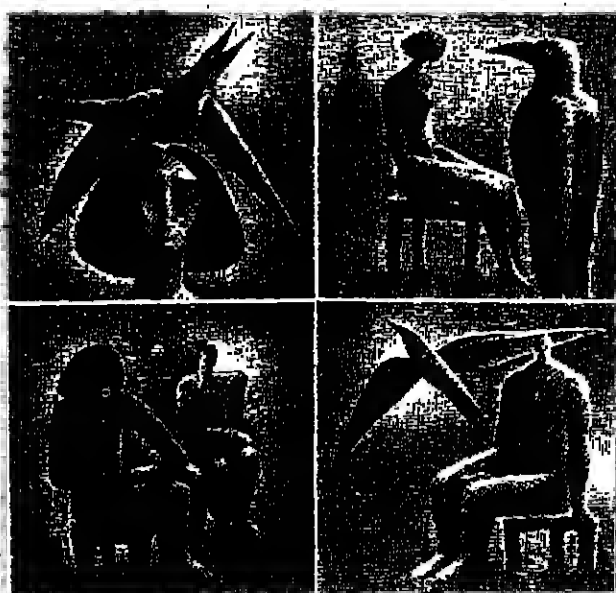
His paintings are scattered around the world — given away to friends or acquaintances, sold for the price of a bowl of soup. His first individual show came late, in 1989. Hussein Bilal, head of the drawing department back in the salad days at the College of Fine Arts, commented at the time: "He has managed to bring something different out of our heritage." And Gamil says: "I could never claim to be a popular artist."

There are none of the knee-jerk Islamic or Coptic conventions in the tender, tentacles pieces. "Things live, and things die." He hates the idea of an exhibition. "Art is not a show with people standing around looking at it. Art should be public, it should be everywhere, on walls, in the streets. It should be for people. Diego Rivera, yes, but also the pharaohs."

So Gamil just draws, and gives his work away. To say he is not in it for the money would be stating the obvious. He draws a broken-down blue Lada. There are no flashy clothes, no Italian shoes or paisley ties, none of the silk-waistcoat-and-gauche look about him. He draws continuously, every day, for the pleasure. The first exhibition implied an attempt to communicate, and the attendant fears: of not being able to communicate, or of communicating too much. Henein and El-Washabi talked him into it, though, mercilessly exploiting a weak point: they told him he had no right not to show people what he had created. Critics, and others, liked the show, of course. But the anguish of the process persists.

His best-known works are the powerful, sensual pointillist creations where lovers and fish and creatures in between meld and blend into each other. There is a delicate, almost frail composition which hangs on a wall somewhere: androgynous lovers, heads bent close, huddled near the bottom of the frame, beneath a window and a vase. But there are also the big portraits, in colour, of women with wide, close-set eyes and exuberant hair and pointed chins — as blurry as a beloved's face remembered, or imagined.

Profile by Pascale Ghazaleh



Two sets from Gamil Shafiq's most recent works: the artist at work. His best-known works are the sensual pointillist creations where lovers and fish and creatures in between melt and blend into each other

roared at Shafiq junior and senior. But Gamil found another sort of family in the camaraderie that bound students and faculty. Each professor was responsible for his students for the full four years, and the relationships that developed from working and hobnobbing together continuously were tinged with both master-disciple dynamics and the fluidity of friendship among equals. The professors taught, but were also involved in their students' lives, helping them

to belong to his time and his place."

But soon Gamil found himself uncomfortably perched on the horns of a dilemma. It was proving difficult to work in journalism, which required that art serve a purpose, target a certain audience and convey a certain message — where the absolute freedom of the artist was lost. Working as an illustrator limited his creativity; the ability to draw what he wanted, when it struck him, became his dream.

for the slippery fish that might or might not bite.

The fish theme is persistent. On one of his trips — to attend an art workshop in Romania — Gamil's luggage went astray. Clothes and, more importantly, brushes and pens were in limbo somewhere between Beirut and Bucharest. Only oils and turpentine were available on-site, so Gamil went for long walks along the Tuscany and picked up rocks that looked like fish. He added only a few features and tones. "It was a di-

delicate, almost frail composition which hangs on a wall somewhere: androgynous lovers, heads bent close, huddled near the bottom of the frame, beneath a window and a vase. But there are also the big portraits, in colour, of women with wide, close-set eyes and exuberant hair and pointed chins — as blurry as a beloved's face remembered, or imagined.

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Pack of Cards

by Madame Sosestris

♦ Is there no end to the recognition one man can receive for his work? If that man happens to be Naguib Mahfouz, then obviously not, for he has just been awarded the Guggenheim Medal for Arts and Culture, which was received on his behalf by friend and colleague Mohamed Salimawy at a gala benefit in New York recently. At this stage, it wouldn't surprise me at all if the number of awards received by him were steadily catching up with the number of novels Mahfouz has written — and I say this with nothing but the utmost pride and pleasure. The news was passed onto my friend by his agent, the American University in Cairo Press, and the award followed a gala benefit celebrating *Africa: The Art of a Continent*, a first-of-its-kind exhibition attempting to present a major survey of the artistic achievements of the African continent.

♦ There's nothing like a little tragedy every now and then to add spice to one's life, especially if the tragedy falls on someone else: because when the feeling's gone and you can't go on, it really is a tragedy, dears. And at the end of this month, the Japanese Nippon Theatre Company will be coming to Egypt to present the most tragic tale of them all

— *Medea*. Directed by director/producer Yukio Ninagawa, twice a Laurence Olivier Award nominee and renowned for his gift of creating images that carry an intense and overpowering emotional weight, the play has already been performed in Europe, America and Britain with great success. Featuring an all-male cast, it tells the morbid story of the revenge of a woman who is so struck with rage at her husband's infidelity that she is driven to murder. Don't you just love her?

♦ It may have been the 2nd National Cinema Festival, but it included the 6th competition for feature films and the 8th competition for short films and documentaries. Inaugurated last Sunday at the Cairo Opera House, and hosted by minister of culture Farouk Hosni and festival head, director of the Cultural Development Fund Samir Gharib, over the past week the festival honoured actress Zuzu Nabil, the late actor Adel Adham and directors Mahmoud Atallah and Atef Salem by holding seminars to discuss their reputed works.

♦ You thought the Oscars were something? Pfah! If you want real glamour and glitz, and yearn to hear about something with a little more substance than *Braveheart* gaining rightful recognition, then AUC's Oriental Hall is the place to be next Wednesday, when the Adham Centre for Television Journalism holds its annual awards dinner to hon-



Above: Medea is transformed into a bitter creature seeking revenge. Right: "How sad it is, I shall grow old... but this picture will remain always young... if it were only the other way... if it be I that were always young and the picture that were to grow old." (The Picture of Dorian Gray). Nippon Theatre Company's oil paintings, exhibited in the Marriott's Verdi ballroom last week. Left: Portrait of Mahfouz by Nippon's teacher, the renowned Sabry Ragheb



MBC and Nile TV. Adham Centre director Abdullah Schliesser plans on publicising this during the dinner, but never one to be able to keep a secret for long, I'm going to tell you all now that as of next semester, the Centre will be doing its bit to keep up with the times — and such trying ones they are, dears — by not only going digital itself, but offering a course in digital media. And to show just how great their work was even without the help of the latest technology, a screening of the students' most outstanding work will be shown during the dinner.

♦ If the name Khaled El-Fiki sounds familiar, then it's only because the *Weekly* recently published a series of photographs taken by him in Bosnia; and, as we all know, "his camera does not lie". Khaled has been a very busy man lately. Currently in Switzerland on a Pro Helvetia scholarship, he has been frantically making contacts to have his work recognised. On the last count, four newspapers in Switzerland had published his photographs. And he is well on his way to becoming a household name; on the seventh of this month, Khaled's photographs of Bosnia will be displayed in an exhibition in Zurich which will last for ten days.